



THE BETROTHAL  
OF ELYPHOLATE

III

HELEN R.  
MARTIN

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The  
Betrothal of Elypholate



“ ‘He ’d sooner see me by the table sewin’ and makin’ good use  
of my time than wastin’ it on them novel books ’ ”

# The Metabolism of Elypholate

AN INVESTIGATION IN THE PENNSYLVANIA DETOX

BY

Helen Reichenmyer Martin

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Statue of the goddess Minerva, from the temple of  
the goddess Minerva, at the city of Athens.

# The Betrothal of Elypholate

AND OTHER TALES OF THE PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH

By

Helen Reimensnyder Martin

Author of "Tillie: A Mennonite Maid," "Sabina," etc.

With Illustrations by

Charlotte Harding and  
Alice Barber Stephens



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THE BETROTHAL OF  
ELYPHOLATE



# THE BETROTHAL OF ELYPHOLATE

## I

**L**IKE Napoleon Bonaparte, Elypholate Yingst, also, had doubted in his ambitious youth whether it was possible for one with such a name ever to rise to eminence. "Yingst" was sufficiently difficult and unmusical, but "Elypholate" was manifestly impossible.

Yet, although he always signed himself "E. Yingst," he never, when directly questioned, concealed the Fact. "Not to deceive you, it's Elypholate," he would stoically reply. It was the extraordinary conscience inherited from a race of Mennonite ancestors who had suffered persecution and exile for their faith that made it out of the question for him to deviate from the path of strict truthfulness even to so small a degree as to change the name imposed upon him by his parents.

It was this same extreme conscientiousness which

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led him, when at the height of his professional success in the city of New York, to ask the radiant woman whom he loved and who loved him, to defer her consent to marry him until she had visited his parents on their ancestral farm in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and had seen the home of his childhood, the manner of his rearing—and all the rest. She must not give herself to him until she should know all that it is possible for any woman to know of any man before her marriage with him.

It was with truly Spartan courage that he made arrangements for her to visit "the farm." He was far from sanguine as to the outcome of it. He knew her pride of family, her almost superstitious belief in blood, her ignorance of other conditions of life than those privileged ones in which she had been reared. Would she prove large enough to recognize, beneath the crude conditions which would necessarily seem to her uncouth and repulsive, the real excellence of his inheritance?

He would never forget her naïve astonishment upon hearing from his lips that his parents were plain, uneducated New Mennonites, of Lancaster County. She had met it without flinching, but he was sensitively suspicious that the knowledge had been a stab to her pride and all her inherited prejudices.

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And when she should discover how entirely acquired were all his social graces and manners, how (according to her standards) vulgar was the background of his life in its boyhood's impressions, would it not repel her from any thought of marriage with him? And could he blame her if it were so—he who knew so well the atmosphere of refinement in which she had been always shielded?

Well, the die was cast now, and he could only wait for the outcome. This afternoon she would arrive at New Canaan and be introduced into his mother's household.

The incongruity of her in such surroundings smote him. Again he questioned his wisdom in having planned to subject her love to this test.

“But no. Better discover it now than later, if she is going to despise my origin,” was his final conclusion.

He had left New York city a day ahead of the date fixed for her departure for New Canaan. There was an important matter which he must discuss with his mother before Laura came to them. All minor details as to the appointments of the household, and so forth, he would leave untouched; for Laura must see things at his parents' home as they always were—there must be no unaccustomed frills. There was only that one matter that he must emphatically settle

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with his mother before he introduced her to the girl whom he hoped to marry.

It was early on the afternoon of her expected arrival when Doctor Yingst sought his mother to "have it out" with her.

He found her in the kitchen, rolling out pastry.

Mrs. Yingst was a well-preserved woman of about sixty years of age. The countenance looking out from her Mennonite white cap was mild and placid. The nervous force manifested in the keen, fine face of the eminent New York physician was evidently not inherited from his New Mennonite mother.

It was early spring, and the door and windows of the large, clean kitchen were open wide. It was not, however, the sweet country odors of the springtime that were wafted indoors to mingle with those of the stewing fruit on the stove, but it was the nearness of the stables that was (most unpleasantly) manifest.

"I 've been to the village, mother," the doctor began, seating himself opposite to where she stood working at the table.

"Are you home long a'ready?"

"I just came in."

"What for did you go, seein' you 're got to go in again this after, to fetch out *her*?"

"I went on business."

"What for business was that?"

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The mother of such a son might well have looked on him with pride, but Mrs. Yingst's religion forbade such human weakness, and the monotonous placidity of her countenance was quite unmoved as her eyes were from time to time lifted from her paste to the handsome face of her only child.

"Mother," he earnestly but gently spoke in answer to her inquiry, "you must make up your mind to give up taking your vegetables to the Lancaster city market. I have urged you so often. Now, I must insist upon your stopping it. You are too old to stand for hours twice a week behind those market-stalls. Father is as much opposed to it as I am. If there were the least necessity for it—but you know there is n't. Why do you persist in it, mother?"

Doctor Yingst was convinced that his mother's selling vegetables behind a market-stall, in the city of Lancaster, would be to Laura the final, intolerable straw.

"I could n't leave the vegetables go to waste," Mrs. Yingst replied, as she deftly lifted a circular layer of paste on her palms and laid it on a pie-pan. "We raise more 'n what we use still."

"Give away what you don't need. No," he added, seeing, from the slight change in her quiet face, how he had shocked her frugal soul, "I know that is n't practical advice in this neighborhood, where there

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are no starving poor. Let father sell to the hucksters what you don't use."

"This long time a'ready he wants to do that. But the vegetables fetches more on market still."

"But, mother," he expostulated, leaning forward across the table, and, in his eagerness, not minding the sprinkling of flour that he was receiving, "can't you realize that when you have a son who earns an income of not less than twenty thousand a year it is a reflection on his filial care for you when you try to earn this poor little pittance twice a week at the market? It is a disgrace to me, mother. I beg you to give it up. Won't you do this for me? You know there is nothing on earth *I* would not do for *you*."

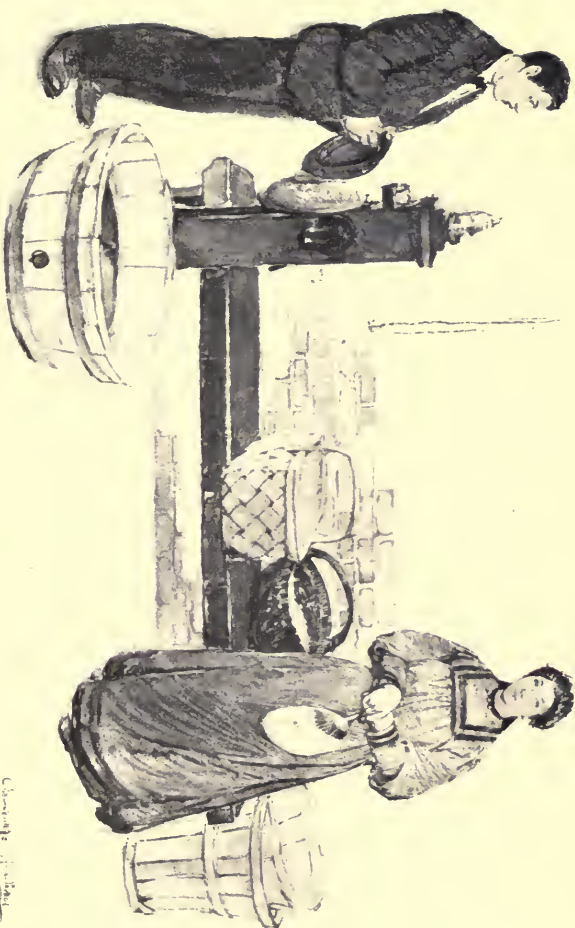
"The hucksters would give pop only twelve cents a dozen fur eggs, and I can make 'em fetch twenty-five or thirty on market, 'Lypholate."

He leaned back in his chair and gazed at her, despairingly.

"I wish I could make you feel, mother, how much depends on this for me. The best happiness of my life!"

Mrs. Yingst's rolling-pin paused for an instant as she looked at him, evidently with an unexpected flash of insight.

"Do you mean mebbly she," with an indicative twirl of her thumb, "is proud with herself that way,



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“She ’d been to Millersville Normal and it got her that proud — and Jake’s mom wants to say Jake did n’t do just so well.”



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and would n't like it so well havin' her man's mom sellin' on market? I heerd of such a'ready."

"She would not be able to understand my permitting you to expose yourself like that, when I am able to give you every comfort and luxury."

"Is she so wonderful tony, 'Lypholate? To be sure, I knowed you 'd want to marry a way-up young lady. You 're so educated and fash'nable. But, 'Lypholate," she cautioned him, "if she 's so proud with herself that way, mebbly she won't make you a good housekeeper. Jake Gutfleisch, he married that Herr girl that lived up the road a piece from New Canaan—she 'd been to Millersville Normal, and it got her that proud—and Jake's mom, she wants to say Jake did n't do just so well—the Herr girl 's such a dopple (awkward person). She won't bake fur him. She gives him baker's bread and canned meat and even canned soups, yet! Now, think! I hope you took notice a'ready, 'Lypholate, when you was keepin' comp'ny, if your girl 's handy or not, before you *ast* her. Did you *ast* her yet?"

"We are not definitely engaged, mother."

"But you 're in with her wonderful thick, ain't you are?"

"Mother, I want to marry Miss Coxe more than I ever wanted anything in this world. Will you or won't you help me to get what I so much want?"

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Won't you stop going to market with your vegetables?"

"If that would stop her sayin' yes, 'Lypholate, she would n't be the woman fur you, my son," his mother said, with unwonted emphasis.

The young man felt the force of this. Nevertheless, he persisted.

"Is my happiness less to you than the few dollars you make every week at market—money that you can't spend, but just lay away in a bag?"

"It would n't be right to waste them wegetables we can't use ourselves," Mrs. Yingst quietly repeated.

"Well, then, mother," her son suddenly announced, again leaning forward on the table, "you can't go to market to-morrow morning or ever again, for *I 've sold your market-wagon!* I took it in to New Canaan after dinner and sold it for ten dollars to Abram Zech. Here 's four times the money," he added, laying two twenty-dollar bills on the table before her. "And I 'll pay you every week five times the sum you would make at market."

It was by such high-handed measures as this that Doctor Yingst had, all through his boyhood and young manhood, gained his own way in opposition to his mother. Every dollar that had been spent upon his education had been wrung from her by almost brute force. He had always, in his determined strug-

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gles for an education, been aided and abetted by his father, but his road had not been smooth. Perhaps, however, he was none the worse for that. His mother had never resented his rebellion against her rigid economy. Had he been content to stay at home and help on the farm, he would have been a son more after her own heart; but, deep down in her simple soul, she *was* proud of her marvelous, though incomprehensible, boy.

A dumb look of bewilderment was her reception of the amazing, the revolutionary, news that the market-wagon had been sold. She slowly turned her back upon him and carried her pies to the oven. He waited uneasily for her return to the table.

She came back, after a moment, and stood with her fat palms spread out on the dough-board. "If the market-wagon 's sold, I 'll have to take the buggy, then. It ain't so handy to get the things in as what the market-wagon was still. But I guess I can make it suit."

He stared at her for an instant; a flash came into his eyes; his lips twitched, and, suddenly, he bent back his head and roared with laughter.

"What d' you see so funny yet?" his mother wonderingly asked, beginning to gather up the dishes, spoons and knives she had used in the baking.

"If I sell your buggy, too, mother, how will you manage?"

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“Then I ’d have to walk them four miles and carry a big basket. Or borry the loan of a wagon off of Jake Gutfleisch’s. And how would I get to meetin’ still without no buggy?”

“There,” he reassured her, “I won’t sell the buggy. I see,” he said, with a sigh of resignation, “that you must do as you please—and live your own life in your own way, mother.”

He drew a long breath as he rose from the table. Taking out his watch, he compared it with the clock on the mantel over the stove. “Two hours before I must start for the train,” he restlessly said.

He shook the flour from his sleeves and picked up his hat from a chair.

“I guess I ’ll go out to the field and visit with father until train time.”

## II

By an unexpected chance, Miss Laura Coxe was able, on her way from New York city to Lancaster, to make such close connections at Philadelphia that she reached the village of New Canaan two hours earlier than Doctor Yingst expected her, and, consequently, she was obliged to find her own way from the little station to the Yingst farm, a mile distant.

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Eager as the young girl was to see her lover, she, nevertheless, looked upon this contingency as a rather diverting adventure, and, as it was a clear, beautiful, spring day, she started out on her walk with keenest pleasure.

The ticket-agent at the little station had told her in which direction to go. But when she had walked the half-mile from the village, on the country highroad, she found herself obliged, at the joining of three roads, to inquire again the way to the Yingst farm.

The farm-house at which she stopped to ask for information was a respectable red-brick edifice, built with a strict avoidance of any hint of grace or art. It was set back a few yards from the road, and had it not been for the neat, weedless flower beds in front of it, Miss Coxe would have supposed it to be unoccupied, for every shutter was tightly closed, and there was not a sign of life about the place.

Her knock upon one of the two front doors (a great many Lancaster County farm-houses are built with two identically similar front doors, side by side) brought a big dog, bounding and barking, to the porch where she waited. She felt rather alarmed at the vehemence of this canine greeting, but relief quickly appeared in the form of a stout, middle-aged woman and a small boy, coming quickly from around the side of the house, the latter calling the dog from

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the stranger, and the former scolding the child for having "tied the dog loose" (untied the dog).

"Your pop tole you you 're not to tie her loose these dog-days!" the boy was admonished. "Now, you 'll see what you 'll mebby get oncet when pop comes in then! Take her around back now and make her tight!"

She turned to the young lady on the porch as she wiped her wet, soapy hands on her gingham apron.

A wide-eyed curiosity looked out from the woman's quaint, white, Mennonite cap, as her gaze rested upon the unaccustomed vision on her door-step, of the fair-haired, blue-eyed girl in her white-lined raglan and pretty spring hat of dark-blue straw.

"Good-morning," Miss Coxe bowed. "Will you please tell me how to get to Mr. Yingst's farm?"

"Yingst's farm?" the woman repeated. "Which fur Yingst is it you 're after? New Canaan 's got so many Yingsts. It 's a name where 's familiar here. Do you mean mebby Hiram? Or is it Ephraim's? Or Ezra's?"

"Mr. Hiram Yingst."

"Oh, him. Well, his place is up this here road a piece; about a half a mile yet."

"Straight up this road? I make no turns?"

"No. You go up this way, and if you see a red barn, there 's Yingst's. Are you goin' to Yingst's?"

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"Yes. Thank you very much."

"Ach, that 's all right! So you 're goin' to Yingst's?"

"Yes."

"Do you want to hire, or what?"

"Hire?"

"Yes. Hire. Because if you do, I could easy get you a good place."

"No," said Miss Coxe, her smile illuming her bright face, "I am going visiting."

"Oh, wisitin'. Are you from town, or wherever?" the woman curiously inquired.

"Yes—from New York."

"Oh, from there," she nodded. "That 's a long ways to come, ain't?"

"It 's several hours' ride."

"Hiram Yingst's son, he lives in New York this long time a'ready. Mebbe you know him?"

"Yes."

"I took notice he 's home these last couple days. Is it to see him you 're wisitin' down here?"

"Oh, no," smiled Miss Coxe, stepping off the porch, and recovering from her interest in what seemed to her the phenomenal frankness of the woman's investigation of her.

"It 's some dusty walkin', ain't?"

"A little, yes; but I am enjoying the walk."

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“I think we ’ll mebbe have fallin’ weather—it feels so fur rain, fur all it ’s clear yet.”

“Yes? I thank you very much. Good-by.”

“That ’s all right. Good-by.”

As Miss Coxe walked buoyantly on down the pike, she laughed gleefully to herself as she thought how she should enjoy telling her lover of her amusing talk with the odd, fat little woman.

“That she should offer to get me ‘a good place!’ How he will laugh! How interested he would be—if he ever happened to meet her—in her queer language! I wonder if he ever ran across her on his trips down here. Her dialect is not like any I have ever heard. ‘Yingst’s son, he a’ready lives yet in New York, ain’t?’—something like that! Oh, he will be so entertained!”

### III

“Is Mrs. Yingst at home?”

“Yes, I ’m her.”

The two women looked into each other’s eyes as they clasped hands.

“You ’re ’Lypholate’s girl, I guess, ain’t? We was n’t lookin’ fur you till five o’clock.”

“I am Miss Coxe.”

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"I 'm pleased to make your acquaintance. Just walk in oncet."

With a bewildered look in her pretty eyes, Miss Coxe stepped into the close, stuffy, darkened, front room of the plain, brick farm-house. When Mrs. Yingst closed the front door upon the sunlight, they were left in almost total blackness.

"I 'll make the shutters open a little," the hostess hospitably said, and Miss Coxe, afraid to move in the midday midnight, stood in the middle of the floor and waited for a ray of light. The odor of the close, unused room was sickening.

She was struck with the fact that this woman who had answered her knock at the door was dressed exactly like the one at whose home she had asked to be directed to Mr. Yingst's farm. She wore the same sort of white cap, plain black gown and three-cornered cape. It must be the garb of the puritanic faith to which "the doctor" had told her his mother was such a faithful adherent.

"We keep this room shut still, except only when we 're getting strangers," remarked Mrs. Yingst, as she admitted an economical bit of light through the shutters.

She came from the window to the girl's side and pushed forward a large, painted, wooden rocking-chair.

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"Set down and rest yourself," she said, in her quiet, monotonous voice. "It 'll spite 'Lypholate that you had to walk out. He was goin' to fetch you till five o'clock. Did you get here sooner than you thought fur, or what?"

"Yes, I made closer connections at Philadelphia than the doctor or I had supposed could be made."

"'Lypholate 's out in the field with his pop."

"His—what?" tentatively asked Miss Coxe, sinking into the rocking-chair as Mrs. Yingst sat down in another chair just like it.

"His pop. He 'll come in then till he thinks it 's time to go fur the train—and he will now be that surprised to see you settin' here. It won't go long any more till he 's home. Just spare your coat and hat."

Miss Coxe slipped out of her raglan and laid her hat on the marble-topped table, her quick eye noting, meanwhile, the neatness, the stiff order, the primitive furnishings of the room. There were no pictures on the white-washed walls, and no ornaments of any description in the room—just the plain articles of furniture absolutely essential for use.

"'Lypholate tole me how you 're so tony," Mrs. Yingst said, gently rocking back and forth as she gazed with her unvarying placidity of countenance upon the girl before her. "So, I guess we 'll seem

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some plain to you. But us Mennonites don't hold to fash'nable things. We live very plain that way. I tole 'Lypholate, 'We can't accommodate her to satisfaction,' I says, when he said now he 's fetchin' you to see us once. 'Not to satisfaction,' I says. You know, it goes like this: us, we don't care for style, only cleanness."

"Yes?"

"Did it mebbe make you some warm walkin'? I 'll leave you use my fan."

She took from the table-drawer a roll of white tissue-paper in which, it presently appeared, a black paper fan was carefully preserved.

"Here, one day last summer, I nearly lost my fan—now think!" Mrs. Yingst's even tones related as she spread open the treasure and handed it to her guest. "I got it for such a prize with a box of soap. I had it now it will be this five years back a'ready till next summer. I was always careful with it. Yes, one day last summer, I nearly lost it yet!"

Miss Coxe examined the fan curiously. She could discover nothing about it which explained its being so carefully guarded and treasured. It appeared to be worth about ten cents. Having come with a box of soap, the possibility was precluded of there being any sentiment associated with it. She was mystified. Her long walk had made her warm and tired, and she

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began to wonder whether she were really awake or whether she was dreaming all these weird, strange impressions of things that seemed to be passing before her.

"I say!" Mrs. Yingst abruptly remarked, in a deep voice that had in it a touch of the tragic. "There 's the fly!"

Her eyes were fixed, with a stony stare, upon the high back of Miss Coxe's rocking-chair. "Set still till I see once if I can ketch it!" She rose cautiously, but a look of profound disappointment came into her face, and she sighed as she sat down again.

"Me and pop 's tried now fur a week back to ketch the fly. It must have been the day I cleaned up fur 'Lypholate's comin' home yet that it somehow got in. We ain't never been able to ketch it. Such things spites a body, ain't?"

"But are you sure it 's the same fly?" Miss Coxe wonderingly asked.

"It could n't be no other, fur only one got in."

"If you don't use this room," Miss Coxe reasoned with her, "why do you care?"

"I can't sleep good still when I know there 's a fly in the house," Mrs. Yingst sighed, as she resignedly sank back again in her chair. She rocked slowly as she amiably regarded her guest.

" 'Lypholate ain't spoke just so much to me about

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you except he said you was so tony. What does your pop follow?"

"Follow?" Miss Coxe asked, a puzzled distress in her childish eyes. "What is his business, do you mean?"

"Yes. I mean what does he carry on."

"He is a retired physician."

"Now think! Like 'Lypholate, ain't?"

"Yes—only, he is retired now. He is an old man. I am the youngest of nine children."

"You mean he don't carry on nothin' now?"

"Yes. He is too old to work."

"I take notice you don't speak your words like what we speak our'n. You speak so funny that way! Like what 'Lypholate learned himself to speak till he 'd been away to school a couple years. 'Lypholate don't talk like his tongue grew to talk."

A fat, lazy cat had wandered into the room and was rubbing its arched back against the folds of the girl's skirts. Miss Coxe suddenly bent low and stroked the animal's thick fur. Mrs. Yingst noticed that her face grew crimson as she stooped.

"That 's not for us to do—like what you 're doin'—to make a fuss with the cat still."

Miss Coxe sat up again and laughed a little, helpless laugh that somehow struck Mrs. Yingst with a vague sense of pathos.

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"Are you mebbe hungry for a piece?"

"A piece of what?"

"Oh, well, just a piece. Mebby some butter-bread? We 've havin' supper till five o'clock."

"I 'll have a drink of water if you please."

"I 'll go get it."

She left the room, and, after a moment, came back with a thick glass goblet.

"You must excuse me if I call you Laura. Ain't you will?" she asked. "It ain't for us New Menonites to pay compliments and call folks Miss, or Missus, or whatever. We don't favor titles. You know we read: 'Call no man Master'; and we try to obey to the Scripture. Are you Bible-read?"

The question was disconcerting.

"Well," smiled the girl, "I 'm not ready to take a chair of Biblical exegesis in a theological seminary!"

Mrs. Yingst stared uncomprehendingly. "Them big words come easy to you, ain't it? With 'Lypholate, too," she nodded. "Would you like to look at 'Lypholate's pictures?"

She took a photograph album from the table and, drawing her chair to Miss Coxe's side, she spread it open on her own ample lap. With a quiet complacency, but with no apparent pride, she turned the pages to display the succession of photographs of her

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son, taken from boyhood up to manhood. The girl studied them with fascinated interest.

"Here 's one he had took with his pop," the mother said, showing the portrait of a stiffly posed farmer of middle age, with his arm bent at the elbow to a sharp right angle and his hand spread heavily on a small boy's shoulder, as though in the act of arresting him for a misdemeanor against the law. "Pop was always so much for havin' 'Lypholate's picture took."

"The doctor looks like his father, does n't he?" Miss Coxe said, as she bent over the photograph.

"Yes. Him and 'Lypholate favors each other somethin' surprisin'. He always took after his pop more 'n after me."

"Did n't *you* ever have your picture taken with 'Lyph—the doctor?"

"Oh, no, I give myself up to the Lord, and turned plain, before 'Lypholate was born a'ready; and us New Mennonites don't have our pictures took, because you can read in the Word: 'Make no graven images.' That 's why 'Lypholate's pop, he would n't give himself up—he liked so well to fetch 'Lypholate to town to have his photograph took. Pop was always so much fur his boy that way. I used to think 'Lypholate would n't never be no account, his pop made so much fuss with him."

"But he *has* been of some account, has n't he?"

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You must be very proud of him," the girl suggested, looking up into the mother's mild eyes with fire in her own.

"'Pride ain't fur us. We 're loosed of all earthly ties, and joined to Christ. But," she added, "'Lypholate 's a good son, fur all he b'longs to the world. He was always so much fur his books," she began, reminiscently, leaning back in her chair, with her hands folded over the open album in her lap. "When he come sixteen years, he would n't have it no other way but he must go to Millersville Normal. ' 'Lypholate, it ain't worth while,' I tole him. 'You kin read good enough a'ready. You don't need no more education.' But his pop, he upheld to what 'Lypholate wanted, so he went and gradyated at Millersville Normal. Well, I thought certainly that was enough! No. 'Lypholate, then, he wanted to go to college! And then he gradyated at college yet! Now, think! Indeed, I never thought he 'd go so fur 's that. It 's too much." She shook her head. "It ain't healthy fur any one to have too much education. It goes to their heads. It showed on 'Lypholate when he was only a little feller yet. He was always so much fur settin' by hisself and thinkin'. And he was now such a boy fur lookin' at the clouds, 'specially when they was red in the evenin'. I used to try, still, to get him away from such ways, thinkin' it was the pride of the eye. Oh, to be sure," she granted, "sometimes a

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body *kin* see somepin' funny in the sky that 's pretty, but I think them things is a temptation of the enemy of our souls to lead us away from Christ."

Upon this novel view of the beauties of nature, Miss Coxe had no comment to make. Instead, she drew the mother back to her son. "You say the doctor was always a good son to you?"

"Yes, 'ceptin' that he was always in for havin' his own way; and he 'd get it, somehow or nother. But he 's a good son. Oh, yes. Well, to be sure, sometimes he bothers me some. He wants to spend his money on me and pop; and us, we won't leave him. He 'd buy us anything he conceited we wanted, and if it cost a hundred dollars yet! Now, think! Oh, 'Lypholate ain't near that way with his money! He was always fond of his mom and pop. He 'd pay fur hired help fur me if I 'd leave him. But I like to do my own servin'."

"I was sure he must be a good son," Miss Coxe softly said, her eyes downcast. "With all his power, he is so tender!"

"You think a wonderful sight of him, ain't?" said Elypholate's mother.

"Yes—I think very highly of him," Miss Coxe replied, with propriety.

At this instant, the sound of steps in a room beyond arrested them.

"That 's 'Lypholate and pop," said Mrs. Yingst,

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rising. "I 'll go tell 'em you 're here. They kin set with you till I make supper."

Replacing her rocking-chair in the corner from which she had taken it, she went to the door, but turned, with her hand on the latch. "I 'm makin' fried paunhaus for supper. It won't take long till it 's cooked a'ready," she reassuringly said.

She opened and closed the door cautiously, to exclude the admission of a possible fly.

It vaguely crossed Miss Coxe's dizzy brain as, palpitating, she awaited the doctor's coming, that it was well she had taken a luncheon in the dining-car on her way from Philadelphia, as, having thus staved off starvation, she would not be driven to tempt Providence by tampering with such unknown form of diet as "fried paunhaus."

### IV

THE doctor had scarcely time to make an extremely hasty toilet, greet Miss Coxe in the parlor, and present his white-haired father, when Mrs. Yingst appeared to announce that supper was "made."

The table, laid in the spotlessly clean kitchen, was crowded with many and various little dishes, most of which were, to Miss Coxe's inexperience, dark mysteries. Mrs. Yingst was hospitably honoring the oc<sup>d</sup>

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casion by using her best plated silver and her finest ten-cent store-glass and china; and at Laura's and the doctor's plates were napkins.

The doctor's venerable father wore no coat, and Mrs. Yingst, before taking her place at the table, did not deem it essential to put down her rolled-up sleeves.

"I conceited I 'd better mebbe give you a napkin—'Lypholate 's often tole me city people 's used to havin' 'em every day," Mrs. Yingst remarked, after the long, silent "grace." "'Lypholate, when he 's home, he now won't eat, yet, till I get him a napkin!"

In Laura's soul there was an agony of embarrassment. Nothing which her fastidious lover had told her of his home had prepared her for just such unique conditions as these. Yet it was characteristic of her that her outward composure should be in exact proportion to her inward agitation. She would not have taken the trouble to conceal a merely slight confusion, but such internal chaos as at present possessed her called for self-control and tact, and, summoning to her aid as much of these as she could command, she managed to assume a manner of matter-of-fact acceptance of everything about her, except where the betrayal of surprise could not possibly offend.

The doctor's manner helped her. Apparently, he was composedly indifferent to his parents' idiosyn-

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crasies, and his attitude toward herself was unwontedly grave and reserved. Had *he* manifested nervousness or embarrassment, the ordeal would have been too painful to her.

"I like a napkin, myself, when we 're got gravy," old Mr. Yingst remarked, as he helped himself to a large piece of the black paunhaus and then pushed the platter along to Laura.

The doctor at her side helped her to a small slice of it. "You 've never tasted it, and you probably won't like it. It 's pork. But," he added, putting a generous slice on his mother's plate, and another on his own, "you 've no idea how fraught with sentiment and poetry all these Lancaster County Dutch dishes are to me! Now, here 's scalded cheese," he said, pointing out what looked like a large, flat cake of yellow putty. "And 'smear-case,' " indicating a glass dish, filled with what appeared to be slaked lime. "As for these 'snits,' " he said, proceeding to put into a sauce dish a spoonful of stewed dried apples, "my feelings at sight of them, after a long absence, almost render me lacrymose."

"Mebbe you favor apple-butter?" Mrs. Yingst suggested, pushing forward another glass dish, which contained a dark-colored concoction that resembled black apple sauce; "or, would you mebbe like currant jelly fur your spreadin's?"

## The Betrothal of Elypholate

"I 'm going to taste the 'apple-butter,'" Laura gaily declared. "The unknown has ever a morbid charm for me! And the name 'apple-butter' is alluring. Now, Doctor Yingst, how much of this does one take? And how is it eaten? With a spoon?"

"It 's spreadin's!" in astonishment explained Mrs. Yingst. "To spread on your butter-bread. Now, you don't want to say you never *eat* it yet?" she incredulously asked.

"I never saw or heard of it before," Laura laughed, "and I am delighted to make its acquaintance."

"We 're great friends to apple-butter," said the old man, speaking with his mouth full of hot paunhaus. "Our apples, we pick 'em hard so 's they don't rot on us. It seems queer to think you ain't never tasted apple-butter! But I know they got awful funny ways in New York. Well," he added, watching her as she tasted the apple-butter, "how does it go?"

"I never tasted anything more delicious," she enthusiastically answered.

When supper was over, Laura, seeing that there was no servant in the house, insisted, in spite of the doctor's protest, upon helping her hostess to clear off the table and wipe the dishes—work to which she lent such an unaccustomed and unskilful hand that Mrs. Yingst privately warned the doctor next day:

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“You ’d better look further, ’Lypholate; she ’d never make you a good housekeeper. Oh, in some ways, she ’s as nice a young lady as she otherwise could be, but you could do a sight better, ’Lypholate—she ’s so wonderful doplig! To be sure, fur a city-raised girl, she ’s that nice and common I would n’t have believed it. It don’t show at her that she ’s so tony, she makes herself so common with me and pop. But I think, fur all, you ’d better tell her you ’ll look a little bit around first before you make up your mind. She ’s too dumb (stupid) to get married.”

But, as will be seen, the warning came too late.

By the time “the supper work” was finished, Laura had begun to look very weary from her day’s travel and excitement.

“You are tired,” the doctor gravely told her as she took off her gingham apron. “You must go to bed, Laura.”

She was aware of a note in his voice that she had never heard before and that she did not understand. “Will you show Miss Coxe to her room, mother?”

“To be sure, if she feels fur goin’ to bed. Can you sleep cold?” she inquired of her guest.

Laura looked unintelligent, but the doctor came to her assistance. “Mother means do you require a fire in your room. In the apartment traditionally known as ‘the spare room,’ in this house, there is a

## The Betrothal of Elypholate

stove, and a fire can be lighted in a minute if you want it."

"No, thank you. It is n't cold enough to make that necessary. I am a bit tired. Yes, I think I should like to go to bed."

"I put a towel and water-pitcher in your room," Mrs. Yingst said; "'Lypholate, he says you 're like what he 's got to be, too—you would want to wash in your room, and not at the pump like what we do."

"Thank you," said Laura, vaguely.

She bade the doctor and his father good-night; and then she followed Mrs. Yingst up-stairs.

Doctor Yingst put on his hat and went outdoors.

Slowly pacing the board walk in the moonlight, he drew in a long, deep breath, and his lips tightened over his teeth.

"It 's all up, of course!" he grimly told himself. "I see it all with her eyes now and from her point of view. Her prejudices will never let her marry me!"

### V

HE had been strolling about in the moonlight, over the lawn, among the flower beds, and even down by the vegetable garden, when suddenly he was startled by an apparition in the path before him—the ghost

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—as for a moment he verily believed—of his fair lady.

The sound of her voice scarcely reassured him, so wraith-like appeared her pale face and bright eyes in the light of the garden.

“I saw you from my window—and I found I was not sleepy after all—and the night is so beautiful—I thought I would come down to you.”

He looked down into her eyes upraised to his as she stood before him in the path.

What was it, he asked himself, that he read in them? Something which made the hot blood surge up to his temples and beat there.

He ventured to take her two hands in his own and clasp them. “Laura! Is your love for me, then, so strong—and so true?”

“Oh, my dear!” she whispered as, yielding her hands to his clasp, she leaned against him, “I have no language to express my pride in you—that just by your own power—unaided, and against every adverse condition—you have made yourself what you are!”

“Is *that* the way you look at it, Laura?”

“How else could I look at it?”

“Your family pride, my darling—your own rearing in a cultured home—your prejudices—your very instincts—”

“Yes—I have all these limitations, I acknowledge

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it. But, somehow, they are not troubling me to-night. I can't make myself feel them. What fills all my heart is the thought of how great has been your faith in me, that you have so frankly challenged my love by bringing me face to face with what you knew those of my world would be tempted to despise."

"And you do *not* despise it?"

"Dear," she said, drawing her hands from his clasp and laying them on his shoulders, "believe me, the happiness you and I have hoped for is not menaced by anything I have learned this day. Only by—"

"Laura! By what? Tell me, dearest!"

"By any least approach on your part to an unworthy shame for these simple, genuine people who love you so much and who have given you to the world—and to me!"



THE REFORMING OF  
A BRIDEGROOM



## THE REFORMING OF A BRIDEGROOM

LAVINA'S most conspicuous characteristic was an overpowering and quite uncurbed propensity to set people right whom she considered to be in the wrong. Her youngest and prettiest sister, who had recently become Mrs. Gideon Lapp, was just at present in need of her attention. Mrs. Gideon was pursuing a course which must ultimately lead to her undoing, and Lavina was bent upon heading her off.

"She 's getting her mister that spoilt with her yielding ways—if I don't go over there this Easter vacation and learn her—teach her," she corrected her English, "the way she had ought to train that Giddy Lapp, she 'll be so set in her weak ways with him and he 'll be so used to walking all over her (like all the other Dutch in these parts walk over their females) it 'll be too late to mend."

This was Lavina's conclusion after the third letter received from Mrs. Gideon since her marriage to the widower, Gideon Lapp. Not that Mrs. Gideon com-

## The Reforming of a Bridegroom

plained of her Giddy." On the contrary, she praised him in her letters as "a good purvider" and "a wonderful steady man." But in almost every line that she wrote she unconsciously betrayed to Lavina his sore need of wifely discipline.

"I ain't been on compny," she wrote her sister, "but except once since me and Giddy was married aready. Giddy he ain't much for goin. When he has his supper eat he likes to set at home, still, evenings, and read his paper. He won't do it to go even Sundays. Last Sunday me and him have been on church the first time since we was married aready.

"Giddy 's so sneaky (choicy) about his wittles, I get all up-mixed makin his meals to suit him he 's that partikkeller. That novel book you sent I did n't get read all. Giddy he don't favor novel readin' and when he 's setting readin' his noospaper evenings, still, he says he 'd sooner see me by the table sewin and makin good use of my time than wastin it on them novel books. So you best not send me no more of them novels Lavina fur all Ide like wonderful well to read through that there novel you sent me entitled Deserted at the Alter. That there villain in it was n't he something fierce. The things he *done* yet! Why Lavina he was the worst man I ever seen before. But Giddy he don't want fur me to finish it through."

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“To think,” Lavina had exclaimed on reading this, “that she ’d take that off of him! Him sitting there reading his paper, and Katy she has n’t the dare to waste her time reading a novel (with a good moral to it, too) but has to sew till bedtime! I ’d teach him once! I ’d tell him if I could n’t read my novel he had n’t the dare to read his noospaper, which is full of false lies, anyhow, and corrupting to the morals! If he ’d give up his paper I ’d give up my novels. Not unlest.”

The letter containing this most disturbing of all Katy’s revelations as to her submission to conjugal tyranny had reached Lavina on an evening when her perturbation over it was aggravated by the fact that the day had been a very unsatisfactory one in her school-room; for Lavina was the “up-stairs teacher” in a village school of Upper Leacock Township in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

“As a success I ’m a failure,” she told herself severely when, after she had given an “Object Lesson” to show her geography class what a volcano was, the class, subsequently asked to define a volcano, had, to a man, answered that a volcano was a pile of sand with a shooting cracker stuck in the top; and when asked to write an account of how the mountains were formed, Sophie Schnabel had briefly inscribed her answer, “By God’s almighty power.” Lavina did

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not know how to mark such an answer as that. It could n't be called incorrect. Yet it certainly was not scientific, nor would it pass in an examination. The question "Describe how savage people dress," had brought the inadequate answer, "How they dress—they don't dress; only except a string of beads around the neck."

Such a day in school had so intensified her sense of Gideon Lapp's need of marital discipline that before she slept that night she firmly resolved to spend the approaching Easter holiday at Katy's, in order to set her right in the management of her husband.

Lavina was the emancipated member of her family. Her two younger sisters and one younger brother had all submitted without question to the characteristic Pennsylvania Dutch parental authority which had condemned them to a life of drudgery on the farm, the most rigid economy, and scant schooling. Her father was well-to-do, and his refusal to allow her more education than the district school afforded had led to her rebelliously leaving home and "hiring out" in order to earn the necessary money for a term at "the Normal." The "hired girl" among the farmers' families of her acquaintance was a person of distinction in the household, so Lavina was not at all prepared for the sort of behavior expected of her by the fastidious town family by whom she was engaged as

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dining-room girl. She came near to being discharged the very first time she waited on the table, when, as she stood behind her mistress's chair, silver tray in hand, one of the young daughters of the family made a remark about her geography lesson of that day, a lesson on glaciers, and Lavina, her sense of the duty of the moment overcoming her country shyness, suddenly lifted up her voice and delivered herself, over the head of her mistress, of a volley of district school-book information on glaciers, to the consternation of the family.

The lessons she received from this family in "learning her place" were a shock to all her public school ideas of American equality. But her experiences with city gentlefolk revealed to her, by force of contrast, what her mind was ripened for perceiving—the uncivilized life led by many Pennsylvania Dutch women; their inhuman drudgery; their subservience to masculine authority; their dreary lack of pleasure and diversion, and their sordid economy; and from her domestic apprenticeship in the city, she came back to her own people a reformer. Ever since that time, through all her experiences as a student at the Normal school and as village school-teacher, she had periodically swooped down upon one of her sisters or cousins with the fell purpose of putting them to rights where she saw they needed it.

# The Reforming of a Bridegroom

## II

"IF Giddy come home unexpected and seen us settin' in here!" Lavina's sister laughed nervously, as, after opening the front-room shutters just enough to admit a faint ray of light (not enough to fade her best ingrain carpet), she sat down carefully on her elegant "stuffed" red plush rocking-chair, while Lavina, with an air of resolution, seated herself on the equally elegant and also stuffed sofa.

"Well? What if?" Lavina demanded. "What 's a parlor *for*? To shut up dark and never use any? Is *that* what you furnished for? Who paid for your furniture, anyhow? Gideon Lapp? No! Pop, to be sure. Then what right has Gideon Lapp to say you have n't the dare to use your parlor when you want? Every day if it suits you to!"

"He 'd say the carpet would get some fadey fur me. And the stuffed furniture so pressed down."

"Well, what 's carpet and furniture for?" Lavina reasoned, patiently. "*Is* it made to use or ain't it? *I* ain't sitting in your kitchen, Katy Lapp! *I* 'm used to better ways, and when *I* 'm with you, *you* 're goin' to have better ways, too. That long anyhow—till *I* go again. It 'll maybe do you good."

"But you 'll set with me and Giddy out in the

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kitchen, evenings, so long as you 're here; ain't, Laviny?" Katy anxiously inquired. "Giddy, he won't do it to set in here in the parlor! He won't can home hisself in here!"

"Then leave him sit by himself if he has to act so common! Katy, you got to *teach* him once."

Katy gazed at her sister in mingled admiration and awe.

"I could n't ever speak up to Giddy," she shook her head dolefully.

"Nor to any one else, Katy," Lavina reproached her. "If you 'd demanded your rights off of Pop the way I did, you might be where I am—a school-teacher. Independent, instead of being a slave to Gideon Lapp. What did you marry *him* for, anyhow? If you had to marry someone, you could have done better than him—as pretty and as young as you are," said Lavina, with a softened note of sisterly affection.

"Och," said Katy, coquettishly, "I married him to get rid of him oncet!"

"A mighty poor way to get rid of a man! I could n't think of a poorer!"

Katy sighed. "That 's so, too," she admitted.

But "poor-spirited" as Mrs. Gideon looked, she was not, apparently, the unhappy victim of marital tyranny that Lavina determined to consider her. Her evident contentment in her state of bondage, and

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her entire acquiescence in everything against which she ought to have rebelled, tried Lavina's patience sorely. For instance, why, in the face of all the causes for dissatisfaction which she had been pointing out to her, should Katy just now be gazing about her front room with a countenance of complacent pride, instead of indignation, the sentiment she ought to feel against a man who would presume to keep her from using freely any room in her house she pleased to use—especially one furnished by her own father? Lavina almost despaired as she saw how little impression her emancipated views had made upon her sister.

Even in Lavina's eyes Katy's parlor was truly elegant. The crayon portrait of Gideon's first wife (of quite inhuman outline) on a white and gilt easel was a most desirable piece of furniture; the easel had been purchased by Katy at the ninety-nine cent store. Over the top of the portrait a scarf of cream bunting was artistically draped, tied in the middle with pink satin ribbon. On a low table, set like a shrine before the easel, stood a floral tribute made of wax, technically known as "the vacant chair." A highly decorated china cuspidor, a chromo of McKinley with apoplectic complexion, a row of china ornaments on the mantel, a framed motto, "We Mourn Our Loss"—with a weeping willow in the center, worked on canvas in zephyr—these were the objects in which La-

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vina, as Katy's sister, could not help feeling an excusable pride.

"I wonder if Melinda Sourbeer's front room 's as handsome," Katy remarked meditatively. "Do you think?"

"Katy Lapp! Do you mean to say you have n't been over to Melinda Sourbeer's since you married and came to this neighborhood—and Melinda your cousin yet!"

"Giddy, he ain't much fur goin'," Katy weakly answered, cowering before Lavina's disapproval.

"Then why don't you go without him?"

"He ain't much fur me goin' neither. He says he feels wonderful contented stayin' home with me."

"With you sitting by mending his old clothes while he reads his noospapers!"

Katy could not deny it, though she looked apologetic.

"It ain't the point whether *he* 's wonderful contented," pursued Lavina. "The point is, are *you* contented staying at home with him?"

Katy sighed. "I never follow pleasure no more, Laviny, I don't even think about pleasure no more. And I 'm goin' backwards—I 'm less fur pleasure every day. I 'm just gettin' *dumn!*" (stupid).

"How far does Melinda live?" Lavina demanded.

"Just over the church."

## The Reforming of a Bridegroom

"All right—you 're going along with me after supper to see Melinda."

"Mister, he won't want fur me to do it."

Lavina set her lips. "It 's well I came here when I did, Katy! You 're getting that man so spoilt up! You *started* wrong. It ain't too late yet to mend your ways with him, but if it had went—gone—much longer, you could n't ever have done anything with him. You 're just training him to be selfish and make a slave of you. Yes, it 's well I came when I did."

"What are you going to 'do, Laviny?" Katy wonderingly and fearfully inquired.

"Teach you how to take your rights and not be walked over."

"I 'd sooner live peaceable."

"But don't you see it 's your duty not to make him so selfish? And, Katy," confidentially, "he 'll think enough more of you for not letting him down you. Teach him to *respect* you, Katy," said Lavina, with an air of hauteur.

This was an idea too foreign to be grasped by an unemancipated Pennsylvania Dutch feminine mind.

"'Respect' me, Laviny! Why, I 'm only his woman!"

"And who should a man respect more than his wife?" Lavina reasoned ungrammatically.

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Katy gave it up.

"Look here, Katy, leave us go to town this after and shop."

Katy's eyes sparkled. "O Laviny! I wisht I could! I ain't been to town to shop since I was married, it 's two months back. But Giddy's work 's so early done, he gets home till five o'clock a'ready, still."

"We can get back till five if we start right away."

"If we missed a car and was late gettin' home!"

Katy suggested apprehensively but wistfully.

"Then Giddy will wait for his supper till he gets it, see?"

"O Laviny! He 'd have so cross at me!"

"Leave him!" (Let him.)

"O Laviny!" Katy sighed.

"Come on up and get your things on."

"If you was n't here, I would n't dare to," said Katy, as with mingled eagerness and trepidation she yielded.

"Would n't dare to go to town when you want?"

"Giddy, he ain't much fur me goin' nowheres. He 'd ruther I 'd stay home and do the work."

But under the spell of Lavina's stronger will, Katy entered with girlish pleasure into the shopping excursion.

"Where 's your purse, Katy? Take your money

## The Reforming of a Bridegroom

with," Lavina admonished her as they were about to start.

"I ain't got none—only a couple of dollars house money."

"Don't he ever give you spending money for yourself, as well fixed as he is?"

"When I ast him fur somepin' I got to have, he 'll mebbe give it to me, if he 's sure I need it bad."

"I 'd run him in debt till he 'd give me such an allowance! I 'd plague him till he did what I wanted!"

"O Laviny!"

"Spend that house money this after, and he 'll have to give you more."

"Oh, I darsent!"

"*Take* the dare!"

When they reached the town, the temptation of the shops, together with Lavina's strong backing, was too much for Katy, and she recklessly squandered over two dollars in gewgaws.

The reaction from her high spirits set in on the way home.

"We won't be back in time for me to get on my old frock before Giddy gets home," she lamented. "If he did n't see me dressed, he need n't know we went this after."

"He 'll have to know it when you tell him the house money 's all," said Lavina.

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"Mebbe you 'd leave me borry the loan of them two dollars off of you, Laviny," Katy timidly suggested.

"How would you ever get the money to pay it back, without you told Giddy about it?"

"That 's so, too," sighed Katy.

"Why should I—a self-supporting, hard-working female—pay Giddy Lapp's wife's bills, and him so well fixed? It ain't the two dollars, Katy. If you needed money I 'd share my last dime with you, and that you know. But I ain't giving Giddy Lapp a *nickel*! And I ain't encouraging your foolish ways with him."

"I wisht," Katy monotonously repeated, "I could get my workin' frock on before he comes home. But it 's gettin' late on us; ain't?"

"Now see here, Katy—just you keep this here dress *on* (you won't dirty it any just getting a little supper) and face him out with it. Just tell him cheerful, 'I was to town with Lavina this after'—take it perfectly natural—and what *can* he say?"

To Lavina's surprise, Katy broke into a paroxysm of laughter.

"Well?" Lavina inquired. "What 's comic about it?"

"How Giddy 'd look, yet, if I tole him just offhand and cheerful that way, 'I was to town!'—without astin' him dare I! He 'd be that wonderful surprised!"—and again her laughter made her helpless.

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"Well, then, up and do it, if it 's so comic," Lavina urged.

"I wisht I *could* oncet," chuckled Katy. "If a body had n't such nervous feelings when they go to do them things!"

"You would n't have to do any of those things more 'n a couple times, Katy—he 'd soon get taught."

When they reached home, Gideon had not yet arrived, and Lavina did actually succeed in persuading Katy not to change her dress.

"You 'd have to put it on again to go to Melinda's after supper," she reminded her sister.

"Mebbe Giddy won't leave me have dare to go to Melinda's," Katy feebly demurred.

"You just leave me manage it, Katy. You have your joke and your laugh in telling Gideon you were to town and are going on company to-night (you think it 's so comic), and I 'll manage *him* if he makes anything" (makes a fuss).

Gideon and his sixteen-year-old son came in while they were setting the supper-table. He was a stout, comfortable-looking man of middle age, the good-natured expression of his commonplace and rather heavy face indicating that his shortcomings as a husband were due to the influences of environment rather than to natural baseness.

He greeted Lavina stolidly, but kindly.

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"Katy had wonderful glad when you wrote her off a letter that you was comin' till Easter," he said cordially. "This here," indicating his heavily-built, awkward son who hung back, overcome with shyness, "is my son Jakey."

Jakey limply shook her hand and then slunk into his place at the supper-table.

"Why, Katy!" Gideon's surprised glance fell upon his wife in her best blue dress. "Did you put on your best frock because Laviny was comin'?"

"Yes," said Katy, perjuring her soul. "Where have I my jug put?" she quickly added to divert his attention. "Have I it set on the table? Och, yes, there it is. Supper ain't quite fixed all, Giddy. The potatoes ain't made quite."

"Is it that you was mebbe settin' round talkin' to Laviny till it got late on you—ain't?" he asked suspiciously and with a note of disapproval in his voice.

"To be sure I 'd set a while with my sister when she come," Katy answered, with quite unwonted spirit; and Lavina rejoiced inwardly at seeing that her instructions were taking effect.

"It won't do your best frock no good—makin' supper in it," Gideon remarked disparagingly.

"You think?" Katy retorted disrespectfully.

With her first word of self-assertion, something within her had seemed to break loose, and a sudden

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buoyancy of spirit stirred her such as she had never known before in all her life.

Gideon stared. "Well," he grunted, "hurry on and make the things on the table. Have you the butter and milk up cellar?"

"I brang them up this long time a'ready. They 're on the sill settin'. I must cut my bananas now. Laviny, she likes bananas so sliced and milk with."

"Bananas costs expensive," Gideon objected.

"You 're well fixed enough, Giddy," Katy defied him.

Gideon's jaw fell in astonishment. But his attention was attracted by an unfamiliar object on the table. "What 's this here?" he demanded, picking up a new dish and examining it. "Did Laviny bring you this along fur a present?"

For an instant "the enemy" (the devil) assailed Katy, and she was tempted to lie ignominiously. But after a moment's struggle she conquered not only the enemy, but her own cowardice.

"Ain't it a fine thing of a dish, Giddy? I got it at the ten-cent store. It looks handsome on the table, ain't?"

Gideon regarded her coldly. "When was you at the ten-cent store?"

"This after. Laviny, she asked me would I go in town along with her."

Gideon strode over to the dresser to wash his hands.



"His son Jakey heard, with dropped jaw, this unwifely defiance"

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"You let all your work standin', did you?" he asked over his shoulder.

"I had it through all before I went."

"I guess you could of found a plenty to do if you had of wanted to find it."

"But you see, Giddy," she retorted with a perfunctory cheerfulness of tone, "I did n't want." And Katy shrieked with laughter at her own audacity, while Gideon looked amazed and angry.

"Where did you get the money to spend?" he demanded.

"I took the house money. You never let no money fur me, Giddy," she complained.

"You took and spent the house money!" he asked in consternation, while his son heard, with dropped jaw, this unwifely defiance. "How much did you spend all?"

"Two dollars and fourteen cents," Katy boldly answered.

Gideon's face flushed up to his hair. "What d' you buy all?" he inquired huskily.

"Some collars and cuffs like what Lavinia has. They come to a quarter. Then I got such a centerpiece—wonderful stylish—fur the parlor table. And a sofy cushion with Dewey on. And some dishes and some ribbon."

Gideon could hardly believe his ears. "All without astin' me dare you?"

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"I 'm of age, I guess, Giddy," she pouted.

"Do I work all day at the shop fur you to fool away my money where I earn and waste your time so 's you don't earn your keep?"

Lavina's face flushed as dark as Gideon's at these words, and she set her lips and turned her back on him very expressively.

"We 've been married together two months, Giddy," said Katy, "and them two dollars is the first money of yourn I spent on myself. And it 's the first time I was to town since I went with you in to say 'Yes.' So you ain't got no need to jaw."

"If you want to spend, you ast me first," he said with decision. "I ain't makin' up that house money to you. You 'll have to get along without."

"That 'll be your loss more 'n mine, Giddy. It 's *you* will miss the good wittles on the table. Most any thing does *me*."

The supper passed in a constrained silence, broken only by an occasional exchange of forced remarks between Lavina and Katy. Gideon thought, by maintaining a dignified demeanor, to crush in his erstwhile dutiful spouse this new spirit of unwifely insubordination. It was "that Laviny," doubtless, who had "put Katy up" to this strange and quite impossible behavior.

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But Katy had tasted of the sweets of independence and was not to be so easily crushed. Gideon's lack of conversation left her apparently unconcerned, though to be sure she was not without some internal quakings at her own temerity.

After supper Lavina and Katy hurried "to get the supper dishes through," and Gideon, with a deeply offended air, seated himself by the kitchen lamp with one sheet of the newspaper, while his son, Jakey, took the other sheet.

Behind Gideon's back, Lavina, as she dried the dishes, executed a pantomime expressing her determination to take Katy over to their cousin Melinda's. Katy moved her lips in a soundless protest that she must draw the line somewhere. But Lavina succeeded in overcoming her objections.

When their work was finished, instead of drawing about the lamp, they both went up-stairs, coming down in a moment wearing their hats and coats. Katy's face was flushed and her manner nervous. She feared she was going too far.

Gideon's eyes grew stony when he looked up from his paper and saw her.

"What now?" he inquired, with ponderous disapproval in his tone and countenance. "What you got your things on fur?"

"Fur goin' on company, Giddy," Katy tremulously

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answered. "Me and Laving conceited we 'd go to Melindy's over."

"I don't want you fur to go over there," asserted Gideon autocratically. "You 've been runnin' more 'n enough to-day a'ready. Ain't all afternoon enough to do you?—without you must be goin' evenings, too? You stay at home and do your sewin' or snitzin' or whatever."

"Laving won't be here but a couple days, Giddy, and she wants me to go with—to Melindy's."

"I don't want you fur to go this evening. I tell you, you wasted enough time to-day. I don't believe in these females that 's so much fur *goin'*. You just set at home."

Katy wavered and looked at her sister for support.

"Are you ready for going, Katy?" Lavina inquired, moving toward the door.

"Yes, *I 'm* ready," Katy forced herself to answer bravely, though she trembled as she followed her sister across the room. "Giddy," she turned to speak to him plaintively, "you have n't the dare to make me stay home *all* the time."

"You mean to tell me you 're goin'?" he demanded incredulously.

"Yes, I 'm goin', Giddy," she defied him, but there were tears in her voice.

"The paper wants rain," he put up an objection.

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"Then we need n't take umbrellas or gums" (overshoes), said Lavina sarcastically. "It 'll be clear till we get back."

"You 're slighatin' your work to go runnin'," Giddy rebuked her scathingly. "They ain't any coals up fur the kitchen fire. Mebbe it 'll go out till you 're home a'ready."

"What 's the matter with *your* bringing up a bucket of coal, Gideon," suggested Lavina pleasantly.

"It ain't fur the mister to do the housework," Gideon growled.

"Well, if the fire goes out for want of coal—with you two able-bodied men sitting here loafing over your noospapers—it could *go* out—and *stay* out, too, before I 'd ever make it up again. Come on, Katy."

She laid her hand on Katy's arm and drew her after her as she opened the door.

"Look at here! How long are yous going to stay?" Gideon angrily inquired.

"I don't know right what fur time we 'll be back," Katy answered flippantly, her stock of courage reinforced by Lavina's support.

"Yous be home till nine o'clock," commanded Gideon threateningly.

"We 'll be home till we please, Gideon," said Lavina.

"I 'm a-goin' to outhen the lights and lock the doors

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and windows at nine," he affirmed. "If yous ain't here yous can stay out all night!"

Katy again wavered at this and would have backed out, but Lavina drew her on.

"If he locks us out, I 'll take you home with me, Katy, to Upper Leacock."

"O Laviny!" Katy gasped, but she allowed herself to be led away—while Gideon, nonplussed, gazed after them in dumb amazement and displeasure.

### III

KATY'S enjoyment of the unaccustomed dissipation of a visit to her cousin Melinda at the other side of the village, was much tempered by her anxiety as to the outcome of her insubordination.

Melinda received them in her kitchen, her parlor fire not being lighted, and all Pennsylvania Dutch kitchens being living-rooms as well.

Katy kept her eyes so glued to Melinda's kitchen clock to watch the approach of nine (at which hour Gideon was going to lock the house) that she lent a very absent mind to the animated talk between Melinda and Lavina, and she took little part in it herself, though she and her cousin, being nearly of an age, had always been intimate.

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On the way to Melinda's, Lavina had maintained that they must, in order to establish Katy's wifely independence, stay out past the hour at which Mrs. Gideon had been commanded to return.

"You got to teach him, Katy. You can't begin earlier. And once you 're got him taught, I don't believe you 'll have any more trouble with him. Giddy Lapp ain't a *bad* man," she conceded. "I 've seen worse."

"Well, I guess!" loyally cried Katy. "I guess *mebbe!*" she emphasized her loyalty.

"But I guess you see now, Katy, you did n't get rid of him by marrying him."

Almost on the stroke of nine there was a loud knock on Melinda's kitchen door which startled them all and brought a little hysterical shriek from Katy in her nervous apprehension of retribution.

"I wonder who 's comin'?" Melinda speculated as she went across the room to the door.

A gruff voice spoke to her from out the darkness of the porch.

"Is the folks ready fur goin' home, pop says to ast yous."

Melinda turned her head and called over her shoulder to her cousins. "So sends mister his Jakey over to fetch yous!"

"You tell Jakey we 're not ready yet," promptly

## The Reforming of a Bridegroom

and firmly answered Lavina. "When we 're good and ready, we 'll come."

"It 's nine o'clock," said Melinda inhospitably and in consternation at keeping such late hours.

"That don't matter anything. We ain't going till a while yet," returned Lavina, while Katy looked rather wretched.

"Supposin' we get locked out fur all night!" she whispered.

"Then we 'll just come back here and ask Melinda to keep us. Or we can go to the *hotel* and charge it up to Giddy."

Katy giggled hysterically. To go to the hotel and charge it to Gideon would be an audacity bordering on the "comic."

Jakey went away, and Melinda returned to her callers.

"Won't your mister have cross at you, Katy?" she inquired. "Mine, he 'd jaw somepin' wonderful if he sent fur me over and I did n't come! I get every morning up at four o'clock, still, and he 'd say I had n't the dare to set up so late or I could n't fall awake till four o'clock yet. He 's in bed now, and I guess he 's fussin' at me not comin' too."

Melinda looked sleepy, but Lavina would not have pity on her and take her hints.

"I 'd soon teach him to leave me be to do as I

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pleased," she affirmed, putting in a missionary stroke for Melinda's benefit. "Don't he do what *he* pleases?"

"But he 's the mister."

"And you 're the missus. What 's the difference?"

Melinda shook her head. "Mebbe them 's city ways, Laviny, but they would n't do us country folks. Ain't not, Katy?"

"I guess we 're a little *dumn*, too, Melindy, to take it off our misters to use us the way they do still," Katy said.

"*Does* mister use you ugly, Katy?" Melinda inquired in surprise. "It was always put out that Giddy Lapp was good to his first wife, fur all she used to say, still, he don't *make much*" (is not demonstrative).

"He 's good to me, too," Katy hastened to reassure her. "But he 's got the same ways about him where all the men 's got around here to their females. Laviny, she don't uphold to them ways."

"Well," Melinda said conclusively, disparaging these revolutionary ideas, "you can't make the men over. It 's their natures to be wonderful mean that way."

"Then it would be my nature to be wonderful *meaner*—till I got 'em cured once," said Lavina.

By half past nine Lavina decided that discipline

## The Reforming of a Bridegroom

had been sufficiently maintained, and she rose to take Katy home.

"I wonder," said Katy nervously, as they felt their way along the dark country road toward the other side of the village, "if Giddy did take and do it."

"You mean lock us out?"

"Yes; mebbe he did n't fur all," she said hopefully. "But," she sighed, "he 's a wonderful set man—Giddy Lapp. He most always generally does what he says he 'll do."

"Now look at here, Katy," Lavina prodded and fortified her, "if Gideon does leave us in to-night, I want you to pass me your promise you won't speak pleasant first. Don't you leave on you care. You hold out this once, and you 'll have him minding to his own business after this and leaving you tend to yours. If you stick up for your independence and self-respect," Lavina said impressively, "just once—Giddy Lapp won't give you no more trouble. He 'll leave you come and go where you want. When you go upstairs to-night—if he leaves us in—just you don't speak to him till he speaks first. Pass me your promise, Katy."

"I don't know if I kin hold out, Laviny. I sure don't want to leave Giddy go to sleep without speaking me good-night."

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“Not even for the sake of having your own way ever after, Katy?”

“I ain’t so sure it *will* work him that way.”

“Well, *I* am. I know the male mind pretty good, for all I ’m single. To be sure it ain’t because I ain’t had my chances.”

With a little further pressing, Katy was induced to “pass her promise,” and then Lavina felt joyfully sure that her mission in this Easter visit had not been in vain.

When they reached home, every window in the little frame house was dark.

“Giddy and Jakey ’s both went to bed a’ready,” said Katy, her voice unsteady.

They tried the kitchen door first. It was locked.

“Leave us try the front.”

The front door, too, was locked, and every shutter bolted.

“He ’ll get up and leave us in,” grimly declared Lavina, “or you ’re going home with me till he comes after you.”

She pounded on the door and rattled the knob violently, then standing out from the step, she called at the top of her lungs, “Gideon! Gideon *Lapp!*”

“Now, Katy,” Lavina quickly instructed her sister, “when he comes, *you* speak up and tell him to leave us in *immejutly!*”

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After a moment a shutter was pushed open in the second story.

"What 's wanted?" growled the master of the house, leaning out in his night-shirt.

"Giddy! You come on down and lock this here front door open!" called Katy.

"Umph!" Gideon answered in a deeper growl, "I don't have to!"

"Yes, you do, Giddy. Or either I go to Upper Leacock with Laviny to stay till I 'm good and ready to come home."

"You have n't the dare!" snarled Gideon.

"I 'll take the dare. You better come and open."

"I 've a mind to make you stand there all night—fur the way you 're actin'!" he retorted.

"But I won't stand. I 'll walk. To the station to go along with Laviny. Are you comin' to make the door open?"

"Well," Gideon grumbled, "wait a minute."

They had to wait so long, while he got into his trousers, that Lavina was tempted to suggest that they give him the surprise of finding them gone when he did come; but she curbed her impatience, deciding that, after all, his reformation could be better accomplished by their remaining.

Gideon jerked the door open and, not waiting for them to enter, stalked away and went up-stairs again without a word.

## The Reforming of a Bridegroom

“Now you mind your promise you passed me,” was Lavina’s parting admonition to Katy as they separated at the latter’s chamber door. “Don’t you speak first.”

“All right,” said Katy. “But mebbe when you ain’t by me, I won’t feel fur bein’ so spunky-like.”

“But you passed your promise. And a promise is a promise.”

“Yes—that ’s so, too.”

Katy’s heart was sore when she joined her lord in their bed-chamber. She was a peaceable creature, and this coldness between her and Gideon weighed heavily upon her soul.

Gideon was in bed with the covers drawn over his head. Katy sank into a chair beside the window and disconsolately leaned her cheek on her hand. Although Gideon did not stir, she knew that he could not possibly be asleep. Her heart beat heavily in her bosom. Were she and Gideon to miss their customary loving good-night? The thought was abject misery. Why had Lavina come here to make this disturbance between them? She could not bear to have him “cross at her.” Rather, far, that he go on treating her with what Lavina called “disrespect.” Should she break her promise to Lavina and speak to him?

No—she could not do that. As Lavina had truly said, “A promise is a promise.” And her taste of

## The Reforming of a Bridegroom

freedom and pleasure, to-day, had whetted her appetite for more. Perhaps, after all, Lavina was right, and if she held out to-night Gideon would n't "bother" her so much after this and would not oppose her "going," now and then.

Suddenly she felt herself drawn into Gideon's embrace. He had slipped out of bed and had come up behind her.

"Katy, you little feist! I believe you *would* leave me go to sleep without speaking!"

He kissed her roughly and shook her playfully. "Will you make up?" he demanded, as she, in a relief from anxiety that was bliss, clasped her arms about his neck.

"O Giddy! Ain't you no more spited at me?"

For answer, he again kissed her. "I know I get too quick cross," he acknowledged; "but when it comes I can't help it no more. I have n't cross at you now, Katy."

And so they rested in peace.

When, next morning at the breakfast-table, Gideon invited Lavina to prolong her visit, Lavina knew that the object of her coming to Katy's had been thoroughly accomplished.

"But, Giddy," she said regretfully, "I got a return ticket, and it calls for me to go back this after. I' m wonderful sorry. Say, Giddy," she suddenly

## The Reforming of a Bridegroom

declared, "I 'll just stay over and *let* that ticket. I 'd sooner."

Gideon chuckled. "Won't that be one on the Pennsylvania Railroad!" he cried. "Fur you to have bought your ticket fur going back to-day and then not *go* back to-day! Say, Laviny, they 'll be hot when they find you did n't go back—ain't? They 're such a tyrannicky trust that way, it 'll just serve 'em right to get good fooled oncet!"

He seemed to take such pleasure in contemplating the confusion of the railroad corporation when they should discover that Lavina did not turn up according to the terms of her ticket, that she, in her gratification at the success of her earnest efforts to reform him, repressed her pedagogical inclination to expound didactically to him that her not using the ticket would be her loss and not the Pennsylvania Railroad's,—which was an act of forbearance on her part to be measured only by the extent of the reformation she felt she had worked.



THE CONVERSION OF  
ELVINY



## THE CONVERSION OF ELVINY

“**A**MAZIAH, you dare read off your composition now,” said Eli Darmstetter, addressing the largest pupil of the class that sat before him in his school-room, one warm afternoon in April.

Eli taught the free school of Canaan, a small country district in southeastern Pennsylvania, and though he was a graduate of the “Millersville Normal,” he had not lost his native provincial tongue, a unique dialect grown out of the free translation into English of what is known as “Pennsylvania Dutch.” Neither had he lost, in the dignity of being the district teacher, the familiar designation of “Eli,” not only because he had all his life lived in this neighborhood, but also because most of his pupils’ parents professed the ascetic New Mennonite faith, and the custom of that sect in addressing all men by their Christian names (based on the Scriptural injunction, “Call no man master’’) had become the conventionally polite form of the district.

## The Conversion of Elviny

Amaziah cleared his throat, stole a hasty side glance at Elviny on his right, and coloring deeply rose to "read off" his composition.

Amaziah was a stalwart young man of twenty; his sun-browned face and hands bore evidence that he was a son of the soil, and his countenance, though somewhat heavy, was so open and honest, his eyes and mouth so kindly, that the heart of the comely Elviny warmed to him.

This youth of twenty and damsel of seventeen were by no means exceptionally old pupils in the Canaan district school, the short winter term of six months giving so little opportunity for an education that many of the sons and daughters of the district farmers availed themselves thereof till even a later age.

Amaziah in a loud though embarrassed voice announced his subject and read his production.

### THE USE OF THE STUDY OF GEOGRAPHY

"The study of Geography which so many people delight in studying. Is studied in all most all parts of the Earth and has been studied since the beginning of the World already. Without Geography we could not get along just so very well still, for if we wanted to go to Philadelphia. We might go to Harrisburg in a mistake not knowing what direction Philadelphia

## The Conversion of Elviny

was from us. When Columbus sailed from Spain in search of the new World He might of went in the opposite direction if He had not of studied Geography before he undertook the expedition. Geography is off great importance to travelers that have to travel all over the World for if they did not know where the places they wanted to travel was They might of never found the places they wanted to travel."

Amaziah had often said that he would rather plow for a week than write one composition. The above had been an especially strenuous effort, made in the hope that Elviny "would n't think he was so wonderful dumb, for all he could n't speak off pieces of poetry as good as her."

He looked vastly relieved as he sat down; and he listened and watched with closest attention as Elviny in her turn gracefully rose, and, placing the tips of her fingers on her lips, coughed genteelly before commencing to read:

### SINGLE LIFE

"Single life is the happiest life that ever was spent when you are single you can go when you please and come when you please and stay as long as you please. When you are single you have nothing on your mind still to bother you. Single life is the sweetest life that ever was spent. When you are single you can do

## The Conversion of Elviny

as you please you have nothing to bother your mind at all."

Without so much as glancing toward Amaziah to note the full effect of these radical sentiments, Elviny complacently resumed her seat. As for him, he found himself so painfully surprised at learning that such were the views of the girl with whom he "kep' steady comp'ny," that he had no attention to give to the remaining compositions of the class.

On their way home from school, in the April afternoon sunshine, he expostulated with her.

"Elviny," he said reproachfully, as side by side they walked on the high, wide pike, "the way you spoke in that there composition, it was something shameful! I did n't think to hear you read off such thoughts as them."

"Och, don't be so dumb, Amaziah," Elviny said, poking him impatiently with her elbow. "A body don't have to mean everything that a person writes off in a composition. I had to write off somepin' then, and it was so warm I could n't think what for thoughts *to* write. There for a while I had a mind to put down how solemn it was to get married. But then it come to me," she said seriously, "how it would be a good deal more solemn not to get married. So I just wrote off them thoughts about single life, to get through once."

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Amaziah's face lighted up with relief. "I 'd have thought you meant it, and I was now bothered something wonderful already."

There had been a tacit engagement of marriage between these two ever since four years before, when Elviny was thirteen and Amaziah sixteen. It had happened one summer evening while they had been swinging together in a hammock by the front gate of Elviny's home. She had suddenly and unexpectedly said to Amaziah:

"Say, will you be mad if I tell you somepin', Amaziah?"

"N-aw!" in a tone of affectionate scorn at the suggestion. "Let it out!"

"Say—I love you!"

"Aw—I knowed that already. Say! Will you be mad if I tell you somepin', Elviny?"

"No; go on; tell me oncet."

"I love you."

The understanding thus established had grown clearer every day and hour of the past four years.

"If them books is heavy for you, you 'd better leave me carry 'em then," Amaziah rather bashfully proposed, as Elviny, to relieve her right arm, transferred her pile of school-books to the left. Amaziah always felt embarrassed when he tried to be gallant.

"Well," she conceded, letting him take them, "if you want. It ain't particular to me."

## The Conversion of Elviny

“What for book is this here that you ’re got covered? Oh, ’rithmetic. Do you know, Elviny,” confidentially, “that ’s the only book I ’m handy at? All the other books I ’m dumb in.”

“I ’m different to what you are,” she said; “I always thought ’rithmetic was an awful hard book. When it ain’t so warm I ’d sooner write off compositions than anything else in school; I ’m most always got so many thoughts that way it comes easy to me still. But say, Amaziah, ain’t you glad school ’s goin’ to be done next week? And me and you ’ll never go to school no more. Oeh, but I ’m glad!”

“Then we ’ll keep comp’ny reg’lar, ain’t?” Amaziah affectionately demanded, coloring and looking self-conscious. “Soon ’s we ’re done school? You ’ll leave me set up with you Saturday nights still, ain’t you will, Elviny?”

This privilege had not yet been granted to Amaziah, as, in the etiquette of Canaan, it would have been irregular for him to have “set up Saturday nights” with Elviny until both of them had finished their schooling.

“Who else would be settin’ up with me but you?” Elviny answered, with an embarrassed little laugh. “Don’t be so dumb.”

Amaziah laughed too and blushed again, and glanced behind him on the pike, to make sure he was un-

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observed, he pressed his sweetheart's hand as it hung at her side. She returned the pressure, then of a sudden drew away from him bashfully, and for a moment they walked on in a rather strained silence.

"It 's warm, ain't?" he presently hazarded.

Elviny started at a something unusual in his tone; something which betrayed the fact that for some reason he was not at his ease with her. She knew in a flash what had come into his mind, and, instinctively, she tried to fight off the dangerous subject which she felt he was taking courage to broach.

"Whether it 's warm?" she repeated inquiringly. "Yes, I believe it 's warmer than what it was right away this morning."

"It looks some for rain," he remarked.

"You think?" she said, a slight surprise in her voice as she examined the sky. "Does the noospaper call for rain?"

"I did n't see the noospaper this morning then, but the sky looks for showers, I 'm afraid. I wisht it did n't, for I got to help pop through—he 's plantin' in the garden this evening, and if it rains we 'll have to come in and leave it rain—and then we won't get done already."

"I wisht, too, it don't rain, so you 'll get done once."

"Yes, anyhow," nodded Amaziah.

## The Conversion of Elviny

“Ain’t this a hilly road?” Elviny quickly asked, to stave off the disagreeable theme she knew was impending. “It makes me some tired to walk from William Penn home.”

“William Penn” was the name of the school-house.

“Yes,” answered Amaziah, “there ’s hills a-plenty all along this here road. Why there ’s hills on the pike already when you ’re only at Noo Danville. Say, Elviny?”

He turned upon her with decision, and she winced as from a lash.

“There ’s just only but one thing, Elviny, that I wisht—”

“Now, Amaziah, I know what you ’re at—you need n’t say nothin’ about that!” Elviny tried to check him. “I don’t want to hear to it!”

Amaziah set his jaw obstinately. “It ’s time me and you had this here thing out and done with it,” he affirmed. “I like you better ’n any girl in Canaan District, but I ain’t goin’ to waste my time settin’ up Saturday evenings with a girl that ’s likely any day to give herself up and put on them darned Noo Mennonite little white caps and gray dresses with them foolish-lookin’ capes! I know them Noo Mennonites!” he defiantly exclaimed, his resolution to speak his mind at its highest. Elviny turned pale at his tone and look of determination. “Your folks is Noo

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Mennonites from way back to your great grandfather already, and when it 's in a body's blood that there way, they 're bound to give themselves up sooner or later—unless they promise they won't never! I 'm afraid of it for you, Elviny."

"A body to hear you talk, Amaziah, would think it was the smallpox, anyhow, 'stid of religion!" Elviny almost sobbed.

"Yes, and I 'd anyhow as soon it was the smallpox! Elviny, I 'd as soon see you dead as see your pretty face in one of them darned—"

"Amaziah! I ain't goin' to listen to no sich talk! You speak something shameful!"

"Well, I like you 'cause you 're pretty, and if you went and made yourself ugly by wearin' them caps and capes and dull colors, and if you went and turned plain and would n't never no more go to town with me to see a circus or a county fair or have our photographs took or whatever, where 'd be any comfort for a feller in bein' married? Elviny, I tell you now, straightforward, I don't want to be married to no Noo Mennonite. And if I ain't to marry you, I don't want to waste my time settin' up with you Saturdays."

"Then you need n't! I guess I can find a plenty others that wants to set up with me."

Amaziah's determined jaw slightly relaxed. But he held out. "And I guess I can mebbe find others

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that wants me to set up with 'em, Elviny, so far forth as that goes," he retaliated.

"You 'll be keepin' comp'ny, I guess, with Sally Haverstick then!" crossly said Elviny.

"It 's very probably," he relentlessly acknowledged, "unless you pass me your promise you won't never, as long as you live, put on one of them little white caps with ties."

"But, Amaziah, how can a body tell whether or no she 'll ever come under conviction and be led to give herself up?" Elviny reasoned with him. "I might never, mebbe. Then again, I might any day. You might mebbe some time come under conviction yourself. A body can't tell of them things. I can't choose you instead of Christ, can I? I think you are, now, onreasonable."

"You pass me your promise you won't never put on their little white caps with strings—that 's all I got to say. Anything you want me to promise back again, I 'll say yes to. If you 'll pass me that promise, Elviny, I 'll marry you and be the best husband to you that anybody kin."

Elviny knew full well the force of these words, for Amaziah always meant just what he said, and always stuck to it. Moreover, he would be fully able to carry out his promise to be a good husband to her, for he was the only son of a father who owned three large

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rich farms, and was, therefore, in the language of the neighborhood, very "well fixed."

"If it were n't in all your folks to turn plain, Elviny," Amaziah firmly continued, "I 'd never have no fears of such a giddy-headed girl like what you are turnin' plain, for it 's your nature to be wonderful fashionable, and you 're so much for pleasure-seekin' that way. But," he continued, with stern emphasis, "I never knowed a son or daughter of a Noo Mennonite that did n't some time or 'nother in their life give theirselves up then. And I ain't runnin' no such risks. You pass me your promise you 'll never wear a white cap with ties, or I 'll go and keep comp'ny with Sally Haverstick or whoever."

"I tell you, Amaziah," Elviny said brokenly, "How can a body make such a promise like what that is? If I ever came under conviction—"

"Then join the Methodists or the Baptists. I pass it as my opinion that there 's good in all religions. You can have religion without turnin' plain. The Methodists stays fashionable after they are convicted of their sins."

"But if I was to ever come under conviction, Amaziah, I could n't never hold to the things of the World no more. It would n't be accordin' to Scriptures, deed 'n' it would n't," she pleaded, with quivering lips. "Oh, Amaziah!"

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They had turned from the pike into the lane leading to Elviny's home, and the girl suddenly stopped short, leaned against the fence, bent her arm over her eyes like a child, and sobbed. Amaziah's kindly face twitched with sympathy for her trouble as he awkwardly stood before her.

"I guess you think I 'm usin' you mean, Elviny," he said tenderly, but with no relaxation of his firmness. "But it 's for the happiness of both of us in the coming future before us, Elviny. I could n't be contented married to no Noo Mennonite. I could n't like you if you did n't dress and act fashionable like me."

"But mebbe I 'll never be called to turn plain," Elviny pleaded. "Mebbe," she said hopefully, "the Spirit won't never lead me to see the light."

"But then again mebbe it will. I ain't takin' no sich risks. You pass me your—here comes your mom."

The sudden appearance at the fence of a stout woman holding a dish-pan full of lettuce was the occasion of Amaziah's sudden digression. The woman was dressed in the "plain" garb of the New Mennonites—a straight, gathered skirt, an untrimmed waist extending below the belt (to distinguish them from the Old Mennonites, whose basques end at the belt), a three-cornered cape of the same material as the gown,

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and a little white cap with flying ties. At a first glance, Mrs. Dinkleberger's face appeared to be commonplace enough, stolid, heavy, uninteresting; but a closer examination revealed in her otherwise dull eyes a look that only a deep experience of life can give to any countenance; that look which shows that through some channel the soul has sounded its own nether foundations and has laid hold upon a Reality which only those who lose themselves in the larger life of the Divine can ever find.

"Well," she said in a mild voice, "are yous home a'ready? It 's only a quarter till four?"

"We come right away out then," said Elviny, speaking cheerfully to hide the signs of her weeping. "Ain't we did, Amaziah? Are you pickin' the lettuce for market, mom?"

"Yes, I thought I 'd do it for pop; then it would be done."

"Why did n't you wait till I come to help you through oncet? She does too much still," she added explanatorily to Amaziah. "Ever since she had the pee-noo-mony, it makes her so tired 'till she gets the work through."

"Yes, I 'll be glad when Elviny 's done school oncet, so 's she can help me still. We got such big washin's—'till each has their pile, the wash is big already."

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“That ’s what mom says still,” said Amaziah sociably. “And she ain’t no daughter to help her—only a dopplig (awkward) hired girl.”

“Is your hired girl now a doppel, Amaziah?” Mrs. Dinkleberger asked with interest.

“Wonderful,” Amaziah ruefully answered. “Why, here one day last week she put buttermilk in pop’s tea, and fast as mom gets things redd up still, she gets ’em all through-other. Mom wishes she ’d leave once. But she won’t send her off ’cause it gives you such a name with the neighbors, you know, that way, for not bein’ able to keep your hired girl. So mom leaves her stay right on, for all it gives her so much extry work to have her, and makes her tied down so close.”

“Don’t she never get away, still?” Mrs. Dinkleberger asked sympathetically.

“Oh, now and again she gets to go some. But she never was one of them to go much that way. But you come to see her once, ain’t? Don’t look on turns.”

“I don’t know but what I will, for all I don’t go much neither, since I turned plain—it ’s now four years back. And I have to wait for pop still to drive the horse, ’cause our horse he can’t be drove by no women, he still makes so ugly for me at the railroad crossin’. Why one muddy day he made so awful for me when he seen the cars that the buggy was all over dirt.”

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“Now, think!” said Amaziah in surprise. “Well,” he added, “mebbe some day when I ’m drivin’ over here, mom ’ll come along with me over.”

“Yes, anyhow,” answered Mrs. Dinkleberger, hospitably.

“But I don’t know just when it ’ll suit for the horse,” Amaziah said, glancing at Elviny with a meaning look, as who should say, “It ’ll suit for the horse to haul me over here when you pass me that promise.”

Elviny cast down her eyes and looked unhappy. Amaziah’s face manifested no less misery, but he remained firm.

“Well,” said Mrs. Dinkleberger, “I got to go in now and make supper. Won’t you come in, Amaziah, and set a while?”

“Saddy (thank you), but I can’t just so very convenient to-day. Good-by.”

“Good-by, Amaziah, then.”

She turned to go, but Elviny checked her. “Wait for me, mom, and I ’ll carry the lettuce in for you.”

Hurrying through the gate, she held out her hands for the dish-pan. She did not want to be left alone with Amaziah. She knew him of old,—he would stick to his point,—and she was afraid to trust herself with him lest she should yield.

“You ’ll have enough to do carryin’ them school-

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books Amaziah 's holdin' for you," said her mother. "Take 'em from him and come along then in. You can make the fried potatoes for me for supper."

Without looking at her lover, Elviny took the books from his hands over the fence.

"Promise, Elviny," he whispered, as he gave them to her. "Go on, dear! That you won't never wear one of them—"

Elviny shook her head, the tears rising again to her eyes.

"You think it out and write me off a note then," was his parting admonition. And Elviny left him and hastened after her mother.

ELVINY had known from the first that when Amaziah took that tone of firmness with her, she would, in the end, do what he demanded of her. So she was not surprised at herself when that night, sorely against her conscience, she despatched a note to him, giving the promise that he had required, namely, that she would "never wear one of them little white caps with ties," this particular feature of the Mennonite garb evidently standing to him for a symbol of all the asceticism and narrowness of the New Mennonites' life.

But Amaziah's joy in his conquest was short-lived. When two evenings later, being Sunday, he betook

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himself, clad in the "fashionable" apparel his soul loved, to the home of his sweetheart, he found her so pale, so silent, so woebegone, that he was stricken with remorse and sorrow for her. They did not discuss, or even mention, the painful subject of the promise; but Amaziah felt convinced, after a two hours' fruitless endeavor to make her "act sociable and pleasant," that poor Elviny would never be "contented" again with such a load of sin on her conscience as that promise seemed to be.

"It 's most nearly as worse as if she 'd turned plain," he thought, in great trouble of mind, as he wended his way homeward in the moonlight. "What 's a body to do?"

He realized, as time went on, how great a proof of her love she had given him, and this increased ten-fold his already strong devotion to her. But as week after week he saw her, under the effect of her burden of guilt, grow thinner and paler and sadder, his own conscience began to trouble him.

"She thinks she 's choosed me before Christ," he mused. "And it 's near makin' her sick! Poor thing, she won't never be contented no more, I 'm afraid, 'till she 's took back her word to me."

Tugging at his own heartstrings was the longing to release her from her promise—just for the joy of seeing her look happy once more. But he could not

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bring himself to that point of self-sacrifice. Her relief would be so great that she might be led, in her thankfulness to the Lord, to give herself up at once. And then where would he be? No; he must hold out in his determination to make her forswear the faith of her fathers. In time, perhaps, she would get used to it and cease to fret. He would wait.

“But I wisht I could see her lookin’ contented once again,” he said to himself one Saturday evening, as, with little pleasure in his visit, he walked up the lane to her home. “Blamed if I would n’t most be willin’ to do anything to see her lookin’ contented again.”

He was destined to have this generous wish of his put to the test sooner than he had counted on. When, ten minutes later, Elviny walked into her parlor to receive him, he knew, in a flash such as seldom came to his monotonous, slow-moving mental life, that never had he seen her more beautiful than she appeared to his eyes this night. She was robed as she had never been before. A light gray skirt hung straight from her waist, and a plain, untrimmed, close-fitting basque brought out the beauty of her form and was not concealed by the little three-cornered cape that lay over the basque.

The letter of her promise to Amaziah had been that she would “never wear one of them white caps with ties”—but, oh, the subtlety of the daughters of Eve



“Poor Elviny would never be contented again,  
with such a load of sin on her conscience”



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and the fatuity of the sons of Adam!—an Indian mull cap, not white, but of the faintest shade of gray and having no ties, covered her head.

However, her “plain” clothes were not the greatest change he found in her. What was this new light in her eyes that looked up at him with such deep happiness shining in their clear beauty? A feeling of awe fell upon Amaziah. Had Elviny indeed got religion?

“You see, Amaziah,” he heard her soft voice speak as though coming from a distance, for there was a loud singing in his head that kept him from hearing her clearly, “I ’m keepin’ my promise. I ain’t wearin’ one of them little white caps with ties. This here ’s a tinted gray cap and ain’t got no ties. The Scriptures have n’t got nothin’ about the color nor the ties, only that a woman’s head shall be covered because her hair ’s a pride to her and pleasing to the eye.”

“Are you turned plain, Elviny?” Amaziah managed to ask in a half whisper.

“I ’ve give myself up, Amaziah,” she replied with pale-faced, clear-eyed resolution. “I ain’t broke my promise to you, and never will. I ’ll always wear these here tinted caps without ties to ’em. Now you have the dare to take me, or leave me be.”

“Are you contented again, Elviny?”

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“I never knowed before what happiness it was to be had in this here life. It ’s all in servin’ the Lord, Amaziah. I had such a troubled conscience—it was now a wonderful troubled conscience I had this here while back already. And my fashionable clothes they condemned me something turrible. But it ’s all over now, Amaziah. I ’ve give myself up and I ’m dressin’ plain, and I ’ll never walk no more in the paths of this World.”

Thus had Elviny followed out the invincible law of her being; for the offspring of New Mennonite stock inherit, from an ancestry whose loyalty to conviction made them victims of the persecutions of the Thirty Years’ War, a persistency in “reverting to the original type” that is in their very life blood, and needs only some stress of circumstances to bring it out in force.

“Turn your back around behind you and leave me see how the plain dress becomes you,” was Amaziah’s stolid comment upon Elviny’s sublime renunciation.

Elviny slowly revolved herself for inspection. When her back was toward him, Amaziah measured her shapely form with his masculine eye, then suddenly put his arms about her and held her close to his breast.

“It becomes you something surprising, Elviny!” he whispered ecstasically. “You never looked as

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pretty before. And I never liked you as good as what I do to-night!"

She turned in his arms and laid her head on his shoulder, with a long, happy sigh of relief. He pressed his lips to her soft neck and downy cheek.

"But we 'll have to be married soon, Amaziah—before I join meeting, you know. For after I 'm once joined, I can't marry in the World, no more. And you 're in the World, you know. So we 'll have to be married soon."

"All right, Elviny," Amaziah heartily responded. "I 'll make it suit just as soon as I otherwise can! We 'll be married till the back end of August already!"



## ELLIE'S FURNISHING



## ELLIE'S FURNISHING

THE school-teacher, Eli Darmstetter, had "composed" the form of invitation to be sent to those friends and relatives who lived too far away to be invited by word of mouth.

"Canaan, Lancaster Co., Pa.

"May 10, 1895.

"DEAR FRIEND:

"Inclosed please find an invitation to our Daughter Ellie Furnishing Party, it was to take place on May 5, 1895. But owing to Some of her Prominent Friends being away and Some had former engagements, We Concluded to postpone the affair until the 10th inst. So I hope it will be Convenient for you and your Esteemable Wife to confer us a favor and pleasure by being present at that Evening.

"With Regards and Respects,

"I Remain,

"Truly yours,

"DANIEL SEIDENSTICKER."

## Ellie's Furnishing

Mr. Seidensticker had this form, with some variations to suit individual cases, copied and sent far and wide to all his friends, acquaintance, kith and kin; and the replies that they brought during the several weeks following afforded high entertainment, not to say mad dissipation, to the Seidenstickers. Indeed, so broken up was the dull monotony of their lives by the unaccustomed daily arrival of the mail, and by preparations for the furnishing party and expeditions to town to buy the furniture for Ellie's parlor, that the nerve and brain of the family were strained to a severe tension in sustaining all this unwonted mental and physical activity.

"This here 'n is from Bucks County," Mrs. Seidensticker one evening announced to her assembled family as she opened a letter which Jakey, her nine-year-old son, had just brought from the post-office at Canaan. It was a mild evening in early May, and they were all gathered on the kitchen porch to enjoy the budget of mail which, since the sending forth of the invitations, had come to be the most important feature of their day; Ellie, the grown-up daughter; Silas, her elder brother, who shared his father's labors on their large farm; Jakey, the little brother; and Mr. and Mrs. Seidensticker.

Mrs. Seidensticker, a large, stout woman a little past middle age, wore the New Mennonite plain dress and white cap, but her fat, dull countenance did not

## Ellie's Furnishing

bear that stamp of other worldliness so characteristic of many New Mennonites. Her pretty, dainty daughter Ellie, who was dressed "fashionable," had—much more than her mother—the pensive, nun-like face so often seen behind the black sunbonnets of the wives of Lancaster County farmers.

Mr. Seidensticker, a hard-working Pennsylvania Dutch farmer, did not wear the Mennonite garb. He had never "turned plain" and "given himself up," and he still "remained in the world."

"It 's from Cousin Elipholat," Mrs. Seidensticker continued. "Ellie, you read it oncet," she added, leaning forward in her chair and passing the letter to her daughter, who sat near her on the porch. "You 're handier at readin' writin' than what I am still."

"Leave Si read it," Ellie indifferently returned.

Her mother looked at her inquiringly. "What 's the matter of you, Ellie? Ain't you mebbe feelin' just so good, or what?"

"Oh, I 'm feelin' just so middlin'; I don't want for to read. Leave Si."

Mrs. Seidensticker had been vaguely conscious, in the past few days, of the fact that something was troubling Ellie. The girl was not like herself; ever since she and Sam Shunk, her "gentleman friend," had gone to town together to buy the furniture for the parlor in which Ellie was to "set up Sa'urdays and keep company" with him, she had been pale and list-

## Ellie's Furnishing

less, and at times she wore a look of suffering that troubled the mother deeply. Could something have gone wrong between Ellie and Sam? Mrs. Seidensticker's questionings had brought no confidences from Ellie. What a mortification it would be if, when all the preparations were made for the "furnishing" party, at which the engagement of Ellie and Sam was to be "put out," it should transpire that "one of 'em was n't satisfied with the other!"

Mrs. Seidensticker was greatly troubled.

"Then, Si, you read it," she said with a sigh, giving the letter to her grown son, who sat on the porch step at her feet.

Silas, bending to the task allotted to him, strenuously grasped the sheet with both his hands.

"Dear cousins my Pop he can't come, Because he ain't no more alive. He died. He was layin' for 22 weeks. It 's five years back already that he died for me I 'm sorry he can't come. But he 's dead. I would come but I 'm turned plain and wear the garb now and so parties and such things like them don't do me no good, and I 'd best not addict to them things. Pop he would of like to come. But he is dead this five years now.

"Your Well Wisher,

"ELIPHOLAT HINNERSHIZ."

## Ellie's Furnishing

"Now think!" said Mrs. Seidensticker, with a long sigh. "I did n't never hear that Cousin Jake passed away. He was a good man," she said mournfully. "If yous could see him right now here on this porch, you 'd know he was one of the finest men settin'! He was just comin' forty years old when I seen him last; that was mebbe fifteen years back already. I ain't sure it was just to say fifteen—but we won't stop at fifteen, but we 'll give it that anyhow. Do you mind of him, pop?" she asked her husband.

Mr. Seidensticker drew his long, thin length up from the pump-bed and leaned against a pillar of the porch.

"Ach, yes, I mind of *him*. He had sich a long beard that way. He was very proud of hisseff with his beard, mom."

"Yes," she said, thoughtfully reminiscent; "he was the high-feelingest man! You see," she explained to her children, "he married sich a tony wife! She was wonderful tony. Her pop was a head-waiter in a hotel, and she was oh, a way-up woman. If she got mad, I want you to notice if the sparks did n't fly!"

"And do you mind, mom," said Ellie's soft voice, "how oncet when you took me to Bucks County to see her when I was a little girl, she used to use napkins on the table for every-day still?"

## Ellie's Furnishing

"Yes," nodded her mother. "She sayed she was raised that way. But people's ways is different in Bucks County to what they are here. I 've took notice of that whenever I traveled to Bucks County. Yes, the world changes a heap in thirty or forty miles already. She was so much for makin' the windows open in summer-time. I ain't. We ain't raised to that in Lancaster County. It draws flies. And she did n't raise her babies like what I did. She said I was too much for keepin' 'em covered up and hot. She was n't for that. She did, now, have queer ways to herself. She did n't have no children but only Elipholat and another one that was born dead. She did n't want no more, she sayed, still; she was n't no friend to children. But I tole her when you 're married, you ain't ast do you favor children or no?"

"Who 's the other letter from, mom?" asked Jakey from his perch on the porch railing. "I brung two and a postal card. When John Doer give me our mail, he sayed he could n't make out the writin' on that there postal card, only he could see it was from Ebenezer Duttonhoffer."

"Oh, him," nodded Mrs. Seidensticker. "Here, Si, read it oncet."

The early shades of the May evening were gathering and Silas was obliged to hold the postal card close

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to his eyes in order to decipher its faintly-penciled message.

“FRIEND MARY:

“Pete he has fallin’ fits now and he ’s often took worse, so it don’t suit just so very convenynt and the horse he has bots and this after the mare she got pink eye for me but if the weather ain’t inclement and we can make it so it suits yet for one of the horses we will come then if Sally’s foot gets better she ’s got it so bad in her foot.

“Respectfullie

“EBENEZER DUTTONHOFFER.”

“Ach,” said Mr. Seidensticker; “them Duttonhoffers was always a ridic’lous fambly for havin’ things happen of ’em. They ’ll all be here, you mind if they ain’t! Pete with his fallin’ fits and Sally with her leg or foot or whatever—and every one of ’em. They ’re always close by when they know a body ’s goin’ to have entertainment. And when you go to *their* place they ’re just that near they never ast you to eat. Ach, mebbe they ’ll ast you to pick a piece—but they ain’t givin’ you no square meal.”

“Here ’s one from Cocalico,” said Mrs. Seidensticker. “That must be from Sister Lizzie Miller. Here, Si.”

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"You 'd better make the lamp lit then. I can't hardly see no more," said Silas.

"There 's just only this one any more; I guess you can make out to read that."

"Gimme here, then."

Silas changed his position a bit and strained his eyes to read.

"SISTER MARY:

"I wish you the grace and Piece of the Lord. Mamie got Daniel's Invitation all right she was snitzing the apples and cut herself so ugly in the thumb I 'm writing for her I 'd leave her come if I otherwise could but I don't know what to wear on her. I 'd sooner she 'd go as stay, for all we 're getting strangers Thursdays and we 've made out to clean the kitchen to-morrow, so I don't know how long it will go before I can get time to make her a new dress already. It would be wishful for her to have a new dress her other one where she bought off of Haverbushes is wore out yet.

"SISTER LIZZIE."

"Sister Lizzie 's a wonderful hard-workin' woman," remarked Mrs. Seidensticker. "And now her children 's all growed up over her, she works as hard as ever she did still. And her man, he always used her so mean that way."

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"Does he farm yet?" inquired Mr. Seidensticker, who, having washed his hands at the pump close by the porch, while listening to the letters, was now drying them on one of the roller-towels which hung on the brick wall of the house.

The Seidensticker towel-system was unique. Two towels always hung on the side of the house, one of them doing its second week of service for the entire family, the other its first—the former being used exclusively for hands, and the fresher one for faces. The pump, the two roller-towels, and one "wash-rag" hanging over the top of the pump (and known in the family as *the* wash-rag) constituted the only toilet appointments of the household.

"Whether Sister Lizzie's man farms?" inquiringly repeated Mrs. Seidensticker. "No, he don't carry on nothin' now. He 's such a wonderful man for snitz pie. I guess that 's why they 're snitzing so early. Their winter snits mebbe give out for 'em. Yes, Lizzie's man was always a friend to pie. And he always sayed to Lizzie, 'Put right much sugar on it.' Lizzie thought that 's what made his teeth go so fast, so 's he had to get his store ones already. He 's got his store teeth better 'n thirty years now."

The sound, at this minute, of wheels in the distance, on the road which passed their gate, suddenly set the whole family on the *qui vive* of expectation. Jakey leaped like a squirrel from the porch railing and ran

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to the front fence. Mr. Seidensticker dropped the family hand-towel and craned his long thin neck around the pump; Silas, Ellie, and Mrs. Seidensticker leaned forward expectantly.

Not that they were dreading or pleasantly anticipating (as might have appeared) either a foe or a friend in the approaching vehicle; but in the dull monotony of their lives the passing of a wagon was an episode of exciting interest. For a wagon to pass a Lancaster County farm-house, and the inmates thereof to miss seeing whose wagon it was, was a mishap to be lamented for days to come.

"It 's John Herr's!" Jakey called, as soon as the horse was near enough for him to recognize it.

"Oh, him!" Mrs. Seidensticker said, in a tone of satisfied curiosity. "I guess he 's been in to Canaan for his mail, mebbe."

When John Herr's buggy had passed and disappeared, Jakey came back to the porch.

"Did you fetch the mail for Abe's this evening?" Mrs. Seidensticker inquired of the child.

"Abe's" was their designation for the household, a half mile distant, belonging to the young married sister of Mrs. Seidensticker, who had wedded a farmer named Abe Kuhns.

"Whether I fetched the mail for Abe's?" repeated Jakey. "Yes, I fetched it down to 'em then."

## Ellie's Furnishing

"What did they get?"

"Nothin' but the 'Weekly Intelligencer,' " Jakey replied, taking a handful of dried apples out of a pan on the porch bench and beginning to eat them.

"You 're to leave them snits be now," admonished his mother.

"I did n't eat very hearty at supper," argued Jakey. "I had to hurry to get done once, to go for the mail already, and I had only butter-bread and coffee soup."

"Well, if you feel for some more supper, go to the cupboard and get a piece. Don't eat them snits. They 're unhealthy when they ain't cooked."

"I like 'em better 'n a piece," protested Jakey, though he obediently put them back into the pan; the children of the Pennsylvania Dutch are reared in old-fashioned implicit obedience to parental authority.

"But you would n't like the stomeek ache you 'd mebbe get if you eat 'em," said his father. "A body must be a little forethoughted that way about what they eat still."

Mrs. Seidensticker's stout figure rose heavily from her rocking-chair.

"I 'd mebbe better come in now. You just stay settin'," she added to Ellie. "You seem like as if you was a little tired. You 're so quiet this evening. Ain't you mebbe feelin' good, Ellie?"

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"Oh, I 'm feelin' just so middlin'," Ellie again softly answered.

"Is Sam comin' to-night?"

Ellie rose from her straight-backed seat and took her mother's low rocking-chair. "He did n't speak nothin' about when he 'd come over again," she answered.

"Well, I 'm goin' to bed," her mother announced with a yawn as she walked to the kitchen door. "Are you comin', pop?"

"I might as well, I guess."

Silas and Jakey, without comment, followed their parents indoors and left Ellie alone on the porch. It was generally understood that the coast must be clear for a possible visit from Sam.

Sam Shunk had been Ellie Seidensticker's "steady regular gentleman friend," not only for the past four months, since her eighteenth birthday, but he had "kept steady comp'ny" with her even before either he or she had reached the age or the worldly condition when "settin' up Sa'urdays" was, according to the social rubrics of Canaan Township, the proper and conventional procedure. Time had, therefore, established his prerogative to the soubriquet of "Friend" with a capital F and an especial significance.

Left alone on the porch in the gathering spring

## Ellie's Furnishing

twilight, Ellie's pretty head drooped upon her breast, and a long, tired sigh swelled her young bosom. Presently two big tears trickled over her pale cheeks and a little gasping sigh came from her throat. The measure of her Spartan self-control in the presence of her family was the exceeding trouble and distress manifest just now in every line of her relaxed form and delicate face.

The secret grief that was rending her was the realization that she must give up Sam. In anguish of spirit she asked herself how she could ever bring herself to do it. For oh, she loved him! He was so kind, so strong, so handsome! In all the township, where was his peer? Her soul was knit to his and she did not, she did not, want to give him up!

But she must. Sam belonged to the World. And she—she was about to give herself to the service of her Lord and Master, who forbade that His children be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

It was the "furnishing" that had brought Ellie to this state of self-abnegation. Her mother, as has been said, was a New Mennonite. The creed of this sect, forbidding not only gay apparel, but also any but the plainest and simplest of household furnishings, the custom has grown up among its members of leaving the "front room" of their homes unfurnished until

## Ellie's Furnishing

the eldest daughter shall have come of age, when, if by that time she has not been moved by the spirit to "give herself up," that is, to abandon the vain pomps and glories of this wicked world, "turn plain" and join the New Mennonites, her parents give vent to their long repressed human instincts for adornment and fit up the parlor for her in the best style they can afford.

New Mennonites never force their own convictions upon their children, for since it is the Spirit only, and not any human agent, which can teach men the way of salvation, and as the "mere morality" of the unconverted can never be counted unto a man for righteousness, either he must, of his own free will and accord and without outside influence, give himself absolutely and entirely to the Lord's service, or else be a child of "the enemy" outright. There is no medium course. It is thus that the New Mennonites explain this seeming inconsistency of freely allowing to their children the "vanities" which they themselves eschew as sinful.

The event regularly known in Lancaster County as "furnishing" is, next to marriage, the most auspicious time in a young girl's life. As soon as her parents have "furnished" for her, she is expected to enter upon her matrimonial campaign and, anon, settle down to "keep comp'ny" with one especial

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"Friend," whom, as soon as convenient, she marries, and then the furniture of her parlor is taken with her into her own new home.

Now Ellie had always anticipated with delight the time of her "furnishing," and when it had at last arrived, she threw herself, heart and soul, into the joy of choosing her "things"—the cabinet organ, the "stuffed" sofa and chairs, the marble-topped table, plush album, gilt-framed "Snow Scene," and Brussels carpet. Sam had gone with her, one Saturday morning, to Lancaster, to help her do her choosing. Later in the day he and she had gone to the vaudeville show at the park, and it had been the shock of the latter, combined with what she had suddenly felt to be the wicked selfishness of her enormous expenditures for things unnecessary for the soul and only pleasing to the worldly eye, that had brought her to a realization of the frivolity and error of temporizing with the World, and had convinced her of her duty to abandon its pomps and hollowness; to seek and hold fast to the Truth that the Savior had died to reveal to cold and indifferent man. Her religious nature was awakened, and with clear vision she saw the real things of her life in their true contrast to its vanities. She knew, with a fatal certainty, that never again would she find joy in the things that heretofore had absorbed her to the neglect of her soul's salvation.

## Ellie's Furnishing

She must give herself up. And she must therefore abandon Sam.

How was she ever to break it to him, loving and trusting her as he did?

“What ’ll he think of me, comin’ with somepin’ like this and my promise passed only four weeks a’ready. And he ’s so much for me to dress! And I was always so wonderful stylish! How will I ever tell him I ’m turnin’ plain as soon as I otherwise can?”

But this weakness, she knew, was only a temptation of the enemy of her soul, who watched every thought of her heart, to trip her up and drag her back into the World at the least opportunity.

Meanwhile, while Ellie was sitting on the porch in the May twilight, battling with the weakness of the flesh in the sacrifice which she was called upon to make for the faith that was in her, Sam Shunk was trudging down the road, toward the home of his sweetheart, on an errand that made every step of this usually blissful walk one of pain and effort.

He found Ellie alone on the porch where, a few moments before, her family had left her.

The new pink shirt-waist which she wore made her cheeks look so like ripe peaches that, for a forgetful instant, he anticipated with satisfaction the kisses he would presently press upon their downy softness.

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But only for an instant. The chilling remembrance came to him of the sad purport of his visit to her to-night.

With a heavy heart he seated himself in the rocking-chair at her side.

So absorbed was he in his own mental burden that he failed to notice how subdued and reserved was the greeting which she gave him.

From force of habit he began with his usual form of social intercourse in opening up his customary weekly stint of courting.

"Nice evening, this evening; say not?"

"Ain't!" Ellie's low soft voice agreed.

"How 's the folks?"

"*They 're* pretty well."

A faint impression of something unaccustomed in her tone caused Sam to steal a glance at her fair and delicate face at his side.

"How 's your mom?" he inquired conversationally. Sam was not brilliant in dialogue, and as Ellie herself was usually not remarkably articulate, their social intercourse was sometimes a little difficult.

"She 's pretty well, too," she replied.

"How 's your pop?"

"*He 's* old-fashioned."

Sam gently rocked his chair and gazed out across the darkening lawn.

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"Nice evening, this evening, ain't it is," he returned to the charge.

"Yes, anyhow," sweetly agreed Ellie.

"How 's Jakey?"

"He 's pretty well."

"Is Si well, too?" Sam asked by way of variety.

"Yes, he 's pretty well."

They rocked in silence for a few minutes.

"I 'm glad the folks is all well."

"Yes, they 're all right good," Ellie consented with complacent absence of originality.

"It 's right warm, ain't?"

"Yes, pop he sayed it would make somepin' down before morning, he thought."

"Say, Ellie! I don't trust to be on them trolley cars in Lancaster when it 's goin' to give a gust. Last time I was goin' to take a trolley ride, I seen it was thunderin' and I tole the conductor I wanted off right away at the corner already."

"I guess!" Ellie nodded.

Sam now fell into a temporary silence as he gloomily contemplated the dread task at his hands of telling Ellie the object of his visit. Again he stole a side glance at her, and the strange, plaintive look he detected about her sweet eyes smote his big, generous heart. How could he make her unhappy? She trusted him and believed in his love for her. What should he do?

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"Say, Ellie?"

"What, Sam?"

"That man in the dime matynée in there at Lancaster, last Sa'urday, that could twist himself so queer, still, say, Ellie, that was false hair he had on!"

"You think!"

"I 'm pretty near sure."

"Now think!" Ellie said wonderingly.

"And that colored lady you mind of—that sung sich a touchin' piece about 'I wisht my color would fade,' say, Ellie, she was only a white person with shoe-blackening or whatever on her face!"

"I say!" cried Ellie in surprise.

"A body had n't ought to give their countenance to sich shows like what them is, Ellie. It don't do a person no good."

"No, Sam, I don't think so nuther. And if you feel a little conscientious, you 'd better let sich things be then."

"Ellie, I got to tell you somepin'!"

"Don't tell me to-night, Sam," Ellie pleaded, feeling sure he was going to press her to name their wedding-day, as he had lately been doing most strenuously. "I ain't feelin' good to-night. Don't speak nothing to me to-night."

"I can't help for that—I got to tell you this here. Say, Ellie, it ain't that I have n't got no love to you—but indeed, Ellie, I can't marry you."

## Ellie's Furnishing

Ellie slowly turned in her chair and gazed at him in the deepening darkness.

"Why not, Sam?" she asked, in a voice so low that he scarcely caught her words.

"Ellie, I 'm going to give myself up!"

"Oh, Sam!"

"Don't tempt me not to!" he cried almost piteously. "I want you—you know how bad I want you—but you 're in the World, Ellie, and I can't marry you! If it breaks my heart and yours, I 've got to leave you and cleave unto Christ! It was going with you to town done it—and buying them things for your 'furnishing' and then 'seein' the dime matynée. I seen, Ellie, how pleasing to the eye it was, but not for the glory of Gawd. And I can't never no more give my countenance to fashionable things. I 'm turning plain as soon as I can get to town to get my plain clo'es once. Servin' the Lord ain't easy, it ain't easy," he said. "You mind where the Bible says, 'if a man smite thee, turn him the other cheek.' That 's pretty hard, and it would n't suit me so well to do it. Indeed, I say that. But I must do all them things if I 'm a child of Gawd. And John Souders preached how he seen 'em die horrible already when they was unconverted."

"But Sam—"

"Ellie!" Sam quickly interrupted, as though



“ “ And that next evening, the sky was redder than ever ” ”



## Ellie's Furnishing

dreading the effect of her pleading, "it 's like dyin' to me to give you up. I 'd most ruther *be* dead. But it 's my duty. Last night my sins opened up before me and I was wonderful concerned; and at last, after a great struggle, I made up my mind I 'd give myself to the guidance of the Spirit. Then, here this morning, already, when I fell awake, the enemy was tempting me, and he tole me how pretty you was and how sweet, Ellie. But," Sam solemnly added, "I 've overcome the enemy, and I come here to-night yet to give you good-by."

Only "the angels in the heavens above and the demons down under the sea" could measure the sacrifice which the stalwart youth was thus making in his loyalty to what he felt to be a larger truth of life than any mere personal relation of his own.

"Sam! Sam! Listen at me."

Ellie leaned forward in her eagerness and clasped his big arm with both her hands. "*I* got in trouble, too, Sam, about my sins, after we 'd been to town. I was in wonderful trouble, Sam. And that evening," she eagerly went on, "the sky got so red I thought the world would go to an end. And next day I seen how nice and humble mom looked in her plain dress—and, Sam, *I hated* my furniture and my fashionable clo'es! And that next evening, the sky was redder than ever! And Sam, I let loose of everything—my

## Ellie's Furnishing

clo'es, my furniture, the party—and you—and joined to the Lord! And this morning I went over to Mamie Herr's that I got mad at 'cause she talked down on you—and I knowed I must be satisfied with all my enemies, so I tole her I was n't any more mad yet. And oh, Sam, it never suspicioned me that the Spirit was guidin' *you* too!"

Sam's arms were about her now, and she was clinging to him:

“ ‘Gawd works in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform.’ ”

“Ain't He does, Ellie!” he whispered, pressing an ecstatic kiss upon her lips.

“Ain't He does!” was Ellie's rapturous response.

**MRS. HOLZAPPLE'S  
CONVICTIONS**



## MRS. HOLZAPPLE'S CONVICTIONS

“**L**EAVE us come out on the porch oncet, Lizzie. I got to speak somepin’ to you.”

“Won’t it do till I get through the dishes a’ready, Dan?” Lizzie hesitatingly asked, pausing in her clearing of the supper-table to glance up at her tall husband.

“Come out now,” Dan said with a motion of his head toward the porch.

Dan was accustomed to being obeyed; he was foreman of a room in a cotton factory and those under him were wont to heed the mere lift of his eye. But by no one in his employ was his word, his look, his slightest wish so dutifully heeded as by the pretty young wife whom, with the devotion of a strong, deep and constant nature, he loved.

“The dishes can wait, Lizzie. I ’ll help you through with ’em then,” he said, taking his hat from

## Mrs. Holzapple's Convictions

a nail in the kitchen wall and walking toward the door.

"I got somepin' to speak to you."

Lizzie's sweet face took on a look of faint surprise as, lifting their three-year-old little girl from her high chair, she followed him.

He turned about in the narrow passage leading from the kitchen to the front door, and took the child from her arms.

"I tole you I did n't want you to be carryin' the baby so much still (constantly)," he said in a gravely reproving tone. "Leave her walk oncet. It 's too hard on your back, now she 's gettin' so heavy. Now don't forget again, Lizzie, that I tole you; ain't you won't?"

"I won't," Lizzie meekly acquiesced as she gave the child up to him.

The little girl, in her big father's arms, laughed with glee and patted his smooth-shaven face with a fearlessness that made her mother smile at the cunning audacity of the mite.

Dan perched her on his shoulder and when they came out from the narrow hall to the front porch he swung her up high before depositing her on the floor. She caught his trousers in her tiny fingers and looked up at him insistently. "Up high aden!" she demanded. "Up high! Betty want up high!"

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He swung her up a second and a third time then, with a hug and kiss, again put her down. It was a never-ceasing wonder to Lizzie the way her masterful "Man" would obey the mandates of his tiny, imperious daughter.

This evening, however, as he tossed her "up high," the realization of her growing weight gave him an uneasy consciousness that he was being remiss in his parental duty in not taking some means, whatever they might be, for teaching this audacious baby some of the rudiments at least of respect for parental authority. Why, she minded her mother better than she did *him*! He chuckled inwardly as the incongruous fact came home to him, though his heart to-night was not light enough to be much amused at anything.

"Now, Betty," he said to the child, "you run 'round the yard and play till I speak somepin' to mom."

"I 'm afraid she 'll pull them lilies, Dan," Lizzie anxiously suggested.

Dan's little home on the outskirts of the town was set back in a small "yard," and at the side of the house, just out of sight of the front porch, was a large bush of August lilies, now in full bloom.

Dan hesitated an instant, then a look of resolution settled about his mouth.

## Mrs. Holzapple's Convictions

"Set down and wait fur me a minute," he said to Lizzie. "Come along, Betty."

He took the child by the hand and led her around the house to the bush of lilies.

"Now, Betty," he earnestly spoke to her as he knelt on one knee and held the little girl close to him, "you see this here bush?"

"'Es," Betty answered with an uninterested air. "Want up high! Up high!" she clamored, trying to wriggle out of his arm.

But he held her firmly. "Look at them lilies. Now, Betty, I don't want you to touch one of them posies, do you understand? You have n't the dare to touch one of them," he distinctly and emphatically told her. "Now you mind what I tell you, baby, will you?"

"Betty want up high, Dan! Up high!"

"Will you keep your hands off them flowers?"

"'Es. Betty want up high!"

He tossed her up once more, and when he had put her down, with a parting warning against touching the flowers, he went back to his wife.

"I 'm goin' to train her to listen without bein' watched," he said to Lizzie as he took a chair beside her, his air of determination sitting heavily upon him. "I explained to her she has n't the dare to touch them flowers. She 's old enough to understand and to

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mind. She 's comin' four years old. She 'll be four years old till September. Now if she does touch 'em, I 'll have to learn her!"

"But that won't put the lilies back on the bushes, Dan, if she 's pulled 'em," Lizzie again anxiously demurred.

"I can't help fur that. We got to begin with *somepin*' to learn her to mind without bein' watched," he returned; and, as usual, his word was final and Lizzie, in spite of her uneasiness for her flowers, let him have his way.

"What did you want to speak to me, Dan? Is *somepin*' the matter, or whatever?"

"Yes." He paused an instant, then doggedly added: "I 've been set back by the meetin'."

Lizzie and Dan were New Mennonites and wore the "plain" garb. To be "set back by the meeting" meant to be suspended temporarily from church membership, this discipline not only being counted a disgrace among the brethren, but involving domestic complications that were very embarrassing.

"You need n't mind, Lizzie. I don't mind!" Dan affirmed. He was so accustomed to Lizzie's minding nothing that he did n't mind, that it never occurred to him she might have a personal and separate cause for distress in this matter.

"But, Dan, when was you set back a'ready? I

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ain't heard no one speak nothin' about it. O Dan!"

"Here about three weeks back don't you mind, Lizzie, three of the brethren come to see me one evening? And I did n't tell you what they come fur, because I did n't see no use in your botherin' your mind with their foolishness."

"Did they come to reason with you? But, Dan, what can they lay to *you*? You 're as consistent a member as you otherwise could be!" she loyally maintained.

"You never heard such blamed foolishness as they spoke to me that evening! It 's made me that put out with New Mennonites I 'll never have nothin' more to do with 'em!"

Had a bomb exploded at her feet, Lizzie could not have been more startled and confounded than she was by this unusual language from her smooth-shaven New Mennonite husband. That he should say "blamed!" It was so nearly like swearing—and the language of New Mennonites is ever restrained and well-considered. And that Dan should "talk down" on his church—the true church of Christ! Lizzie's brain reeled as she heard him.

"They come to reason with me and give me warnin' I 'd be set back if I did n't show I cared more fur the Lord than what I did fur my child, because they all

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seen how in meetin', when Betty gets sleepy, still, I hold her on my lap and leave her sleep and how I mebbe smooth her hair, still, or mebbe oncet or twicet kiss her yet! It was disrespec'ful to Almighty Gawd, they sayed, to set such affection on my child. They sayed when my child was with me the Lord was n't paid much attention to, and if I did n't mind to myself better, He 'd mebbe take my baby from me, they sayed. And I up and tole 'em they was a pack of fools. Then they spoke the Scriptures to me how you can read, 'Call no man fool lest ye be in danger of hell,' they says. Then they went. And here the next week they come and reasoned with me again, and wanted to know did I repent of my intemp'rate language? And I sayed I was willin' to take half the blame if they 'd take the other half fur speakin' such nonsense to a man like what they speaked to me—which it ain't to be surprised if it made a body mad. But no, they wanted me to take the *whole* blame, my half and their 'n' too yet! And that there," Dan stubbornly declared, "that there I would n't do! Half the blame I 'd take. But the other half I would n't take. Then here this after, they come to the shop and tole me I was set back till I become conscious to myself I 'd done wrong. I tole 'em I did n't do nothin' to repent. They sayed my deportment in life testifies I live carnal. Them was their

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words. I sayed, did I ever leave liquor boss me, or tobacco, or whatever? So I was that put out with 'em, I got rid of 'em as soon as I otherwise could. And now, Lizzie, to be sure since I 'm set back, you 'll have to come out of meetin' too. Don't wait till they *set* you back—just you up and leave 'em know open, that you ain't no more one of 'em. I did n't tell you none of this before, but now since I 'm set back, to be sure you had to know. Don't leave it bother you any. It don't bother *me* any. I was anyhow gettin' to feel that these here New Mennonites did n't suit me so verry good, with their claiming they 're the only true church. There 's good in all churches, I say."

"But, O Dan!" wailed Lizzie, "the Lutheran religion or the Presbyterian or any of them churches which belongs to the world, them 's no religions to *die* by, Dan! Think what it 'll mean to *me* if you don't hold out in your profession—"

Dan had no time to express his surprise at this unwonted opposition to him and lack of loyalty to his side, for, at this moment, small Betty appeared at the step of the porch, bearing an armful of long-stemmed August lilies.

"Betty picked 'em fur 'oo, Dan," she ingratiatingly lisped, gazing up confidingly into the non-plussed face of her father. "Pitty pothieth fur 'oo!"

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Dan turned pale and the determination in the set of his lips became Bismarekish, as he rose from his chair.

"Dan," faintly cried Lizzie as she caught that look on his face, "what are you goin' to do to her?"

"I 'll have to learn her, Lizzie," Dan's big, firm voice responded. "She 's old enough to get learn 't now and she ain't that dumb (stupid) but what she understood me when I tole her she had n't the dare to touch them lilies."

Lizzie sank back in her chair, as usual acquiescing helplessly.

Dan took the flowers from the child's arms, his face growing a bit paler as she sweetly told him, "Betty picked 'em fur 'oo, Dan. Pitty pothieth!"

"But Dan tole you you had n't the dare, Betty. You must n't do what Dan tells you you have n't the dare to do. I 'll have to learn you that."

He picked her up and carried her into the house and Lizzie, in dread of what was to take place, did not follow.

"It 's time anyhow that he learnt her to mind," she tried to comfort herself. "But it goes wonderful hard with him. He 'll do it, though, if he sets his mind on it. Dan is now wonderful set, still, once he makes up his mind."

A great heaviness weighed upon her heart at the thought of how "set" Dan was. Would he ever

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humble his "high mind" to the point of "giving himself up" once more to the authority of the "meeting?" She could hardly hope that he would. She would fervently pray that the Spirit might soften him—but oh he was "that wonderful set"! And what, if he continued obdurate, must be her course? Her flesh turned cold as she realized with prophetic certainty the impossibility of her yielding in this matter to her husband.

By the rules of the Mennonite faith, a wife can hold no communication with her husband while he remains either a backslider or an ex-communicant. She must assist the church in disciplining him by cutting herself off from all intercourse with him except what is unavoidable in the fact that they live under the same roof. She cannot sit at table with him or share his room. She is prohibited even from speaking to him except when it is absolutely necessary.

To Lizzie, the tragedy of being obliged to take this course with her devoted husband, the realization of the terrible strain her naturally yielding mind must bear in withstanding his strong will, made her very soul sick.

"He 'll try to *make* me mind him; he won't leave no stone unturned to make me give in to him," she moaned in spirit. "And all our happy life together is spoiled fur us yet!"

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HAD her own soul's salvation been the only thing at stake, she would readily have sacrificed it and burned in hell forever for the sake of her earthly happiness with Dan. But it was *his* eternal salvation, also, that was in jeopardy. Until he repented, humbled himself, and was again restored to the favor of the meeting, he was "out of Christ" and lost. She *must* coöperate with the brethren in their disciplinary efforts to restore him to the sheepfold.

Poor Lizzie covered her face with her hands and prayed passionately for strength to "hold out."

### II

THE next day was Sunday, and Lizzie dressed herself as usual for meeting. On this Sunday, for the first time since their marriage, she would go to meeting without Dan. The hands that drew the Mennonite white cap over her pretty hair were cold and trembling.

"Oh, Dan, Dan!" her soul cried out. "My heart will break! I 'd stand by you against any one in the whole world. But I can't stand out against Christ. I *must n't* give way!"

Dan came into the bedchamber just as she was put-

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ting on her black sunbonnet over the white cap. He was carrying Betty on his back, his ears serving as reins for her "horsey."

He started in surprise as he saw Lizzie dressed for meeting. Quickly putting down the child, he went across the room to the window where she stood. He was not prepared for her opposition. Indeed he had not conceived of the possibility of it. She had shared his room the night before and had sat at breakfast with him this morning.

But now, as his eyes rested upon the pale face inside her black hood, there came into his own countenance the Bismarckish look he had worn on the previous evening when schooling himself to the ordeal of chastising his small daughter.

"Where you goin', Lizzie?"

"To meetin', Dan."

She went to him suddenly and clasped her arms about his neck.

"Good-b̄y, Dan!" she sobbed. "It 's the last time I dare touch or speak to you—except when I got to—till you 've gave yourself up again a'ready!"

Dan laughed as he took her chin in his hand and turned her face up to his.

"I ain't leavin' you act like that to *me*, Lizzie! If *you* 'd been set back instead of me I 'd of left meetin',

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you know I would. And when I 'm set back, I expect you to come out from among 'em and stand by your husband."

"I must obey to the rules, Dan," Lizzie faintly murmured.

"You must obey to me, Lizzie. Take off your bonnet."

"Dan, I must choose Christ before you."

"It 's my opinion a woman ain't choosin' Christ when she 's goin' back on her man. Christ would n't want you to choose Him that there way, I don't believe."

"I must choose Him by obeyin' to the rules of the church He founded. And I must obey to the Scripture. The Book says, 'If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him. Receive him not into your houses nor bid him God-speed. He that biddeth him God-speed maketh himself partaker of his evil deeds.' Now, Dan, would n't I *be* biddin' you God-speed if I lived with you as your wife after you did n't hold out no more and was set back?"

"But if you 're wantin' to mind every word where the Book says, you could n't stay in the same house with me at all!" Dan indignantly retorted. "'Receive him not into your house!' You see, Lizzie, that contraries the whole thing yet, and *I don't believe it!*

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There, now, take your bonnet off. I ain't leavin' you go to meetin' no more, Lizzie."

"Dan," Lizzie said with solemn resolution, "I 'm not givin' way. I 'm stickin' clos't to Christ. I 'm not givin' way fur no earthly ties."

"I tell you," Dan sharply returned, "I ain't leavin' you go to meetin' this mornin' nor never no more!"

"I can't help fur that. I got to go, Dan."

Something utterly unwonted in her voice gave Dan a sudden, unmistakable conviction that he had stumbled upon a hitch in his wife's character, the existence of which he had never known. He gazed at her for a moment with steely eyes. Love struggled in his breast with a cold-blooded impulse to crush, at any cost, this hitherto pliable will. A fierce jealousy of the religion to which she adhered, rather than to her husband, burned in his heart.

"You—ain't—goin'," he slowly and with grim determination repeated.

He moved suddenly across the room to the door, went out and locked her in.

### III

Two hours later, in time to cook the noon meal, Lizzie was released from her prison. She manifested no



“ ‘Dan,’ Lizzie said with solemn resolution, ‘I ’m not givin’  
way fur no earthly ties’ ”



## Mrs. Holzapple's Convictions

resentment for her morning's ignominious incarceration. Her long solitude in her room had only strengthened her resolution to "hold out," to adhere through every trial to the rules of discipline of the meeting, to be "faithful to Christ," though her heart broke in the struggle.

When dinner was ready she put the baby up to the table in her high chair, then gently spoke to Dan and told him to "come eat."

In pale, stern silence he came and took his place. Lizzie did not sit down. He looked up at her as she stood beside Betty's chair, ready to wait upon him and the baby.

"Set down, Lizzie."

She shook her head. It was forbidden that she should sit at table with her recreant husband or speak to him any unnecessary words.

"Set down!" he again commanded in a hard, cold voice.

She looked at him piteously, her lips quivering, and again shook her head.

"You set down and eat along, or I don't eat one bite!"

Lizzie's face grew a little whiter and her eyes more distressed. But she remained mute and resolute.

"All right! If you want to make us both sick yet that 's your affairs!"

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Pushing back his chair he strode to the door. At the threshold he turned and spoke.

"It 's easy seen you ain't got no love to me, or you could n't act like what you 're actin'!"

This was hard to bear in silence when it was out of love for him and concern for his soul's salvation that she put herself to this torture.

Dan went out and did not come home again until nine o'clock that night.

It was the first Sunday in their married life that they had not spent together.

He did not find his wife in their bedroom when he came in. Through the open door he saw that she was lying on the settee in the sitting-room. She was "holding out" in a way that even in his jealous, wounded wrath and pain made him marvel at her strength and courage.

And now began a period of their lives that in after years they did not like to remember. Through three long, weary months the sun in the heavens was for them blotted out. In all that time, though living under one roof, they were as strangers to one another, or worse. Implicitly, as of old, Lizzie obeyed her husband's least wish—save only when it conflicted with her church's discipline. But in her loyalty to her religious faith she remained immovable. Occasionally Dan would give vent to his feelings in an out-

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break of bitter harshness toward her. But invariably he would repent him of this, for he could not be adamant to the powerful appeal of her evident anguish.

So the weeks moved on, filled with keenest suffering to both, and with no sign of yielding in either.

One day, when the sorrow of their alienation seemed greater than she could bear, Lizzie went to plead with the brethren to reinstate Dan and thus lift the intolerable strain of her coöperation with them in disciplining him.

She pleaded his virtues.

“He never used me mean in his life, fur all he ’s so wonderful set about havin’ his own way still. But Dan was never no rough speaker. He never was one of them to talk a little short to me that way, like some—any way, not till this trouble come on us a’ready. And he was always a wonderful good purvider, Dan was. He says he ’ll take a half the blame if yous will take the other half. That ’s all the farther he ’ll go. That other half he says he won’t take and he ’s so wonderful set that way—”

Lizzie sighed in deep despair, as again she contemplated Dan’s “setness” in the face of the hopeless obstinacy in the countenances of the brethren.

Dan must humble his pride, was their verdict, and give himself up, or eventually be ex-communicated.

And so, in heaviness of spirit, she went home to the

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sorrowful life of alienation from the husband whom she loved.

Dan's bitterness grew upon him, as week after week she continued to "hold out." At last, one day, when she was taking her solitary meal in the kitchen, he came to her with a question.

"Lizzie," he said, speaking more gently than he had done for a long time, "will you answer me just one thing? How long will it go till you give in to me? I ain't standin' this here thing much longer, Lizzie!"

So unswervingly had she hitherto adhered to her resolve to hold no unnecessary verbal communication with him, that he scarcely hoped for an answer to his inquiry. But this time she raised her sad eyes to his face and gazed at him steadfastly, as she replied, "Till you give yourself up again, Dan. I entertain a hope fur you. The brothers and sisters entertains a hope too."

Dan saw, with clear-eyed vision, as he met her transparent gaze, that never, never would she yield in this matter. If their old relation was to be restored, it would be he—great, strong, masterful Pennsylvania Dutchman that he was—who would have to give in.

And that was what he knew he would never do. Rather would he pack up, bag and baggage, and leave

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her to her Mennonite brethren and her rules—since she preferred them before him. He would not, he could not, give in to her.

But as he looked at her, suddenly for the first time he became conscious of the great change that had been wrought in her in the past months, a change that somehow made her appear remote and unfamiliar to his eyes. Her daily spiritual struggle had given to her countenance a look of other-worldliness, an exalted expression that seemed to see beyond the things of earth.

And there was borne in upon Dan's consciousness, as he continued to look upon this new and unfamiliar face of his wife, the realization of another change. His heart contracted with a sharp agony as he saw this alarming fact. How could he have been so blind, he wondered, in all these weeks, not to have seen it coming on—her dreadful pallor and thinness and that frail droop of her whole frame?

"You ain't eatin' wery hearty, Lizzie," he tenderly said as he noticed the scant supply of food on her plate. "You 're just pickin' a piece (mincing). Why don't you eat more hearty?"

Lizzie sipped her weak coffee and made no answer.

"I take notice your hands are gettin' so wonderful poor (thin), Lizzie," Dan went on in a troubled tone.

Lizzie said nothing.

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"Why don't you take some spreadin's?" he continued, pushing the butter and the currant jelly within her reach.

She shook her head.

"Are you gettin' to feel sneaky (choicy) about your victuals?"

She did not reply.

"I take notice here fur a while back you keep yourself so stroobly. Is it mebbe that you 're too weak to comb yourself?"

She raised her hands to her wavy hair and smoothed it back under her white cap, then again bent her head to sip her coffee from her saucer.

"Shall I get you a bottle of the Sanative Compound or some pills or whatever?"

She gave him a look that expressed her thanks, but shook her head.

"Mom she took seven bottles of the Compound when she was feelin' mean and it set her up wonderful."

Again Lizzie shook her head.

"Where are you feelin' mean that you 've got so poor lookin' at your face and hands? Is it your stomeek or what?"

Silence was his response.

"Damn it, Lizzie!" he burst forth in an agony of mind. "Answer to me!"

She sank back in her chair and stared up at him—

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and suddenly, her eyes rolled back in her head, her face turned marble white, her head fell forward on her breast.

Dan's heart stood still with terror. Was she dead? The blackness of the pit yawned at his feet. In an instant of horror he saw the lonely years stretching out before him without this dear companion.

"Lizzie!" he hoarsely cried. "Come back to me! Come back!"

She rallied from her faint as his warm arms clasped her. The color stole back to her cheeks and lips, her eyes opened naturally, and with a long, tired breath, she rested her head on his shoulder.

Dan trembled with the great revulsion of feeling that shook him. "Lizzie!" he whispered, pressing his lips to hers for the first time in three long months, his pulse bounding at the loved touch. "Lizzie! Lizzie! You shan't suffer no more!"

Weakly she lifted her white, thin hand and laid it on his neck, a look of infinite content stealing into her brown eyes.

"Do you mean, Dan, you 're goin' to give yourself up again?"

"Yes, I do! Lizzie. There fur a minute I thought you was a corp! And my sins opened up before me that clear—I seen it was me killed you if you was dead!"

Her arm clasped his neck in passionate joy.

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"And are you willin' now to take the other half of the blame, Dan?"

"Yes, I am! I 'll go this self-same day and be made satisfied with all my enemies, Lizzie. And I 'll get you a bottle of the Compound."

"O Dan, I don't need no Compound to make me well now!"

She laid her cheek against his and he pressed his lips upon it. It was like the days of their courting.

"I have even more love for you now, Lizzie, than what I used to have, still, before I give way!"

"Let 's always mind after this, Dan, them beautiful words they sung at our wedding out of our hymn-book. Do you mind of 'em, Dan?"

She softly repeated them:

" 'Bless their united love and faith,  
Thus keep them one in Thee;  
Temptations never let take place  
To make them disagree.' "

THE NARROW ESCAPE OF  
PERMILLA



# THE NARROW ESCAPE OF PERMILLA

## I

### SALLIE

**P**ERMILLA had been weeding in the garden when Christian, coming along, stopped at the fence to speak to her. She was almost overcome with mingled confusion and delight at his sudden appearance.

“Och, I ain’t combed!” she apologetically said, smoothing her hair. “I ’m some stroobly.”

“Well, you did n’t know *I* was goin’ to see you, ain’t not,” jocularly laughed Christian, “or you ’d of combed oncet?”

“Yes, anyhow,” shyly answered Permilla, her timid eyes furtively meeting his, then drooping in maiden modesty.

“She ’s menschen-shy,” thought Christian, with a

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complacent sense of his awe-inspiring presence in his "Sunday suit." To be "menschen-shy" was to be morbidly timid before one's fellow-men. That Permilla admired him with an unspoken and hopeless passion, Christian had long been aware, and the consciousness gave him a passing satisfaction in its confirmation of his own good opinion of himself. Of course poor little Permilla, whose pop "rented" and whose folks did not own an acre of land, could not dream of aspiring to conquer the heart of so superior and so prosperous a young man as Christian Yundt, the idolized and indulged only child of his parents, not to mention two doting aunts. But that Permilla should worship him in silence and in despair was only natural and his due. Indeed, how could she help it? Was his peer to be found in all the township—his peer in looks, in worldly possessions, in general attractiveness? No wonder little Permilla languished in secret for the unattainable height of his favor. To be sure, he graciously admitted, he liked the little thing: she was a good, industrious girl, and of a discriminating judgment withal, since she admired *him*. There were some few people, Christian had discovered, who had not the insight to recognize in him all that his parents and aunts saw.

It was Saturday night, and Christian was going to "set up" with Sallie Cougenhauer, the only child of

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

a father who owned two good-sized farms; but he did not grudge, in passing, a few words of kindly patronage to Permilla.

"Are you goin' to weed all evening, Permilla?"

"I have n't to; but I 'm goin' to."

"Why are you, then, if you *have n't* to?"

"Well, I weed, still, till the dark gets me. Pop he can't help none. He 's just clean *sick*," she said mournfully. "He is sick the whole week."

"Ain't he no better, to what he was?" inquired Christian, with neighborly solicitude.

"No, he ain't so good. The doctor says he won't get well," sighed Permilla. "Our hopes is all gone fer him."

"Too bad, too bad!" Christian shook his head. "Well, good-by to you, Permilla! Don't work *too* hard!"

"You sha'n't, neither," politely returned Permilla.

"I ain't to work too hard at settin' up, do you mean?" demanded Christian, with a laugh. "Now, Permilla, if I tell Sallie you spoke that to me, what 'll she say?"

Christian laughed loud in huge enjoyment of his joke as he swung away from the fence and walked on up the road.

"Poor little Permilla!" he thought, with a rather

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tender compassion. "She can't be no *shussle* (lazy person) when her pop 's took and her and her mom have all the work to do yet. And, sure, no feller 'll want to be marryin' her, with no *aus styer* (household outfit always given to a Pennsylvania Dutch bride by her father), and her mom to keep when she 's old, fer they ain't got nothin' in bank. And Permilla she 's a nice little thing; it 's too bad!"

Permilla, meantime, leaning over the fence, watched Christian's stalwart figure striding up the road as long as it was in sight, her mild eyes shining with a soft fire, her young face flushed with excitement, and her bosom heaving tumultuously.

"If we was n't so poor," she longingly thought, "and I could spend more at the clo'es and fix myself up, mebbe Christian would travel with *me* instead of with Sallie Cougenhauer."

She drew a long breath and tears stood in her eyes as she left the fence and went back to her weeding. She knew how vain was her longing. Prudence and economy were the gospel of the Pennsylvania Dutch, and there were no more ardent disciples of this gospel in all the country than the Yundts. Christian especially, youth though he was, had become noted in the neighborhood for his extremely careful weighing of every transaction he made. Indeed, his shrewdness in driving a bargain sometimes "o'erleaped it-

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self" and led to his missing some good opportunities.

As Christian went on up the road after leaving Permilla, his eyes dwelt with satisfaction upon the goodly fields he was passing, all owned by Sallie Cougenhauer's father. Even his courting was three fourths an economic venture and only one fourth sentiment.

There was, however, a lurking misgiving in his heart this evening. For a whole month he had been "keeping comp'ny" with Sallie, and the conviction had been steadily growing in his mind, during all this time, that she was not a "workative-enough girl" for him.

"She 'd mebbee want me to hire fer her (hire household servants)," the uncomfortable possibility sometimes occurred to him, "and *that*," Christian firmly resolved, "I would n't do fer no healthy wife. Her pop and mon 's got her some spoilt."

His having entered upon the enterprise of "keeping comp'ny" with her, it was a foregone conclusion, according to the custom of the neighborhood, that he would marry her. Matrimony was understood to be the ultimate purpose of a man's going to see a girl every Saturday night, and his withdrawal, after a month of such visiting, would have been regarded as a virtual breach of faith. Therefore Christian's

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doubts as to the entire worthiness of the object of his desires gave him some uneasiness. What made his uncertainty greater was the fact that adjoining the other side of his own father's farm was the goodly estate of Ebenezer Smucher, whose daughter Ramah was, Christian knew, a much better worker than Sallie. A better milker he had never seen, or a more rapid butter-maker. She could get up at three o'clock in the morning and have the family wash "all through till breakfast a'ready." True, her father had three other children, and so Ramah's inheritance would not be so large as Sallie's. The question was, would n't her superior industry more than make up for the difference in the landed dowry?

Christian pondered this weighty matter without coming to any conclusion before he reached Sallie's gate.

He knocked on the open kitchen door, and Sallie herself, with sleeves rolled up and wearing a big apron, came forward to meet him.

"Hello, Krist!" she boisterously greeted him. "Come insides. I ain't through all yet. Mom and pop they went aways, and the new hired girl she wanted off to go on a funeral of a neighbor up her way—up behind Reading. So I have to do the supper work when I have my supper eat. I ain't half eat yet. I guess you 're eat a'ready, ain't?"

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“Why, to be sure, Sallie. It ’s most six o’clock.”

“Won’t you pick a piece?” she hospitably inquired, pushing a chair up to the loaded but disordered table. “It ain’t much here no more, but mebbe you ’d like to taste our new hired girl’s pear apple-butter.”

“No; I ’m full. Why did n’t you hurry and get through till I got here, so we could set up together?”

“I don’t like to hurry still; I like to do things by ease.”

“It takes too long that way to get through oncet.”

“Yes. If mom knew I went so slow and left you see the kitchen so through-other,” exclaimed Sallie, “mebbe she would n’t jaw me! *Ain’t* it looks in here!” she cried, in evident enjoyment of the joke of a visitor’s beholding her mother’s usually neat kitchen in such a plight. But Christian did not appreciate the humor of the situation from her point of view.

“Anyhow, if you *have* a hired girl,” he gravely reasoned, “why do you leave her have off? It ’s for her to stay and do the work.”

“But she wanted to go on her neighbor’s funeral,” good-naturedly answered Sallie. “Don’t you think she has a feeling, too, like us? It don’t look nice if we don’t leave her go on her neighbor’s funeral, Krist. Mom would n’t half act *that* way—she would n’t *half* tell her she has n’t the dare to go. You know when

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

a body 's mean that way with their hired girl, then the people has to talk right aways."

"If I *kep*' hired help, she 'd stay home and work."

"Och, Krist," laughed Sallie,—her good nature constantly bubbled over in laughter,—“you 're just some spited that I 'm not done my work! But it don't take me long no more now. I 'll just make the table cleared off, and then I 'll lay over my dishes till to-morrow. Mom can wash 'em by the cooking breakfast."

"Sallie," exclaimed Krist, as the girl began to carry out this program and scrape the plates, “do you mean you 're goin' to *let* them dirty dishes?"

Such a proceeding was shocking to his ideas of domestic economy.

"Och, yes; I often done that way when I did n't feel for washin' 'em up. Sometimes I 'd sooner set and read a book than wash up my supper-dishes; then I just lay 'em over till morning."

Krist stared at her with his most calculating and unlover-like expression of countenance. Presently he spoke, but his simple remark did not reveal his inward state of chaos.

"Readin'! You like to set and read a book still, do you? That 's somepin' I don't do—read. That 's somepin' I can't control myself to."

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"I like it now and again, for a change oncet."

"I don't see no use in it. It don't bring no dollars in, nor it don't help get the work done."

"But it 's interestin', Krist."

"Why is it interestin' when it ain't helpin' you any to get along?"

"Well, it 's interestin' to *me*." Sallie flippantly dismissed the discussion. "Now," she announced, pushing her cleared-off table against the wall, "I 'm done. Come on out and leave me show you my flow-ers, Krist."

Sallie's flower-garden was another source of mental perturbation to Christian. "What 's the use in spendin' time plantin' flowers?" he had often chilled her enthusiasm over her flowers by inquiring. "You can't eat *them*."

"But I like 'em just for nice, Krist."

"See my shrubs!" she ruefully exclaimed this evening, as she took his hand and led him out of doors. "They 're nearly *all* (all gone) a'ready, and it 's only the 20th of May yet! They 're goin' over so wonderful fast! Here 's only one or so on the bush any more. It spites me something awful."

Christian made no comment, and her hand in his received no answering pressure. Although Permilla was entirely outside the possibility of his calculation,

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

he did think of her industry in her vegetable-garden with a private comparison between the two girls that boded ill for this flower-loving Sallie.

“Our neighbor acrost the road he planted such nice bulbs and wines and things,” said Sallie, “and he has such a nice flower-garden. He sent for his bulbs to New York yet. Now think! And now here he has to move, after bein’ there only two years. It ’s mean, ain’t?”

“And can’t he take along them bulbs he bought?”

“Why, no. Whoever moves in will have all.”

“I could n’t stand that,” exclaimed Christian. “Why, sooner ’n some one else would have ’em after me payin’ fer ’em and doin’ all the work, I ’d pull ’em all up and throw ’em away.”

“Oh, Krist!” laughed Sallie. “If you ain’t something of a holy terror!”

They left the flower-garden and went to sit on the porch.

When, an hour later, Sallie’s parents returned home in the buggy, Christian promptly took his leave, though it was long before his usual time of saying good-night.

As he trudged along the highway through the darkness he made a Spartan resolution: “With this here Sallie Cougenhauer I don’t travel no more.”

Ramah Smucher was a far more “workative”

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woman; of that he was sure. He would go, on the next Saturday night, to "set up" with Ramah.

That Sallie would grieve and the neighbors "put up talk" at this unprecedented turning from one girl to another—a thing never done in Zionsville township—Christian was well aware.

"I ain't a-carin'," he doggedly said to himself. "I 'm marryin' to suit myself when I marry."

His sense of his own high value in the matrimonial market made him feel but little compunction in thus experimenting with the tender hearts of the girls of Zionsville.

### II

#### RAMAH

AFTER a month's trial of the charms of Ebenezer Smucher's daughter Ramah (so named after the memorable city of Scripture in which was heard "Rachel weeping for her children"), Christian clenched the matter, at least in the eyes of his neighbors and of Ramah, by inviting her to go to town to the county fair. His injudiciousness in thus rashly binding himself before feeling entirely sure of his own mind concerning Ramah—whom, indeed, he found rather tame and bloodless after buxom and boisterous Sallie Cougenhauer—gave him, when it was too late, some

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

uneasiness. But he was anxious to attend the county fair himself, and while he was "keeping comp'ny" with Ramah he could not decently go without her. His only safe course would be, he well knew, to stay at home himself; but that was a sacrifice he was not willing to make.

"I 'd take more enjoyment if it was Sallie going with," he rather regretfully thought. "Ramah, she 's so quiet. But," he comforted himself, "Ramah 's a more workative girl than what Sallie is."

But one serious objection to Ramah was that she seemed so unimpressed by the honor of his attentions to her. "A fellow wants to be *made of* by his girl. Ramah she don't never make much."

Even his munificence in offering to escort her to the fair met with a lukewarm reception.

"Look at here, Ramah; I 'm takin' you to the fair Mondays," he had magnificently said as they sat together on the front porch on Saturday evening, Christian in his Sunday suit and Ramah in a gorgeous gown of red sateen trimmed with narrow black velvet. Christian admired Ramah's Oriental taste for splendor of color, though he felt some misgivings, now and then, at her evident fondness for dress.

"It must cost expensive to buy them clo'es," was his troubled doubt.

"I was goin' to work on the field, fair-day," Ramah objected. "I don't know if I could go with."

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"You better had, Ramah," Christian urged. "It 's nice at the fair. You can see a good bit of people you never seen before. If you don't feel for walkin' round, you can just set in the buggy and look at 'em."

"I don't know," she answered without enthusiasm, "if pop 'll want me to let the work. He might mebbe say he won't do it to leave me go."

"You can work all morning. We ain't got no need to start early. Not till it gets two o'clock a'ready we start."

"Will we get home till six o'clock, in time for me to milk?" Ramah anxiously asked.

"Yes,"—Christian nodded approvingly, a warm glow about his heart at her zeal for her domestic duties,—"it gets no later than six till we 're home. You *want* to go, don't you, Ramah?"

"Why, yes," mildly responded Ramah. "I would n't care to." Which dubious form signified her willingness, not her lack of it.

The appearance of her father at this instant in the doorway, his shirt-sleeves rolled up, his old straw hat on the back of his big round head, and a pipe hanging on his thick red lips, gave them an opportunity to complete their plan.

"Say, pop, Krist he ast me would I go 'long to the county fair Mondays. Have I dare to go?"

"Yes, willingly," promptly answered Mr. Smucher, tossing his head to expectorate across the lawn.

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

Christian recognized in this ready permission the satisfaction with which Mr. Ebenezer Smucher contemplated the union of his eldest daughter with so eligible a suitor as Christian Yundt.

It so happened, however, that this very event of going to town to the fair, which promised so well for Ramah's matrimonial prospects, proved her undoing.

"I think it can't be I 'm goin' to town oncet," said Ramah, as, on the following Monday, Christian helped her "on the buggy." "It is five weeks since I was on a buggy."

"Mebbe you stick, most *too* clost to the work," graciously suggested Christian, as he gathered up the reins and his sleek mare started swiftly down the road.

"In a sense of the way, mebbe I do," granted Ramah.

"But work 's healthy," Christian hastened to amend his suggestion.

"Still, I 'd mebbe be heartier if I 'd let the work a little now and again. Mom 's always sayin', 'Now you done plenty enough; just *let* the rest part of it.' But I never felt for stoppin' till it 's all through a'ready."

Christian nodded. "Hard workin' and clost savin'—that 's the way to get along."

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“Krist, I want to take time, while I ’m in town, to buy some new dresses and a couple hats,” Ramah said. “Will you drive me round to the stores?”

“Are you needin’ some new things? It seems like you ’re got a new dress on every time I see you, Ramah. Now this here dress,” he said, touching her sleeve, “ain’t it a new one?”

“No; I had it four times on a’ready. It only cost me three dollars any more.”

“Three dollars for one dress!” Christian almost gasped. “Mom never pays more ’n one seventy-five or so!”

“I do now like the pretty new things to wear on me,” said Ramah. “That ’s why I work so hard, so ’s pop ’ll give me plenty enough to dress with. Indeed, I could n’t stand it not to have a new dress once in so often, and a new hat to match.”

Here was a confirmation, from Ramah’s own lips, of the fear which had frequently cooled Christian’s ardor in making love to her. An extravagant love of finery was her weakness. It was a shock to his feelings to hear her so frankly acknowledge it.

“Will you take me to the stores, Krist?”

“We won’t have much time at the fair if we go to the stores,” Christian answered without cordiality.

“I ’d sooner miss the fair than my buyin’ my

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new things. Pop give me five dollars to spend yet."

"I don't know where the stores is at," Christian objected.

"Well, *I* do," promptly affirmed Ramah, with a note of persistency in her cold little voice which struck Christian with surprise, for it suggested a quite unconquerable obstinacy in a character which he had felt, without so defining it in his own mind, to be wholly negative. "I know Lebanon eighteen years now, and *I* can show you where the stores is at, Krist. I don't miss myself in town."

This was the introduction to an uncomfortable afternoon for Christian. Instead of sitting in his buggy viewing the passing crowds on the fair grounds, eating peanuts and squandering an occasional dime on a side-show, he was dragged, an unwilling victim, from milliner's to dry-goods store and back to milliner's, witnessing the while, with keen discomfort, the quite reckless extravagance of his girl in indulging her taste in ribbons, laces, and other furbelows.

"They sell ice-cream *here*," Ramah hinted to him as they were passing through the aisles of the department-store. An essential feature of the festivity of bringing a girl to town was treating her to ice-cream.

"Do they?" dully responded Christian. He had

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seen a sign at the door, "Ice-cream, a dollar a gal."

"I ain't payin' a dollar for my gal," he resolved.

"We 'll look a little furder, Ramah," he told her.

"I don't like this here place."

"But it 's a good place, Krist, and I 'm wonderful empty. Let 's set awhile here and eat our ice-cream."

"I ain't stoppin' here fer no ice-cream," shortly answered Christian.

"Why not, Krist?"

"I like Beitel's better. That 's where I always go."

"I don't like Beitel's near as good as what I do this here. Come on, Krist. *I 'm* havin' my ice-cream here, anyhow!"

She walked on ahead of him, and there was nothing he could do but follow her, which he did with a swelling rage in his heart at the prospect of paying a dollar for the treat.

When, however, he found, to his immense relief, that the sign at the door was a mistake and that he had to pay only twenty cents for the two biggest ten-cent saucers of ice-cream he had ever seen, he waxed quite jovial and affectionate in the reaction of his feelings; so much so that on coming up from the basement café on the elevator, he turned to the boy who ran the machine and spoke to him with cordial friend-

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liness: "Much obliged to you; come to see us—ain't—when you come to the country."

The boy grinned appreciatively and winked at the salesman who was with him on the elevator.

"Did you see how pleased he was that I told him to come to see us?" Krist asked as he drew Ramah's hand through his arm and walked with her out of the store.

But his good nature was not permitted to last very long. As they went down the street, Ramah saw in a shop-window a red belt and chatelaine, marked seventy-five cents, which instantly her vanity coveted.

"My money 's all," she told Christian. "Will you leave me borry the loan of seventy-five cents off of you, Krist? I 'll pay it back to you as soon as I otherwise (possibly) can."

Christian turned red with embarrassment. He ought to offer to make her a present of it, he knew, but his frugal soul shrank from "spending any" on such a useless bauble. If it were only something for their future housekeeping, now, he would not feel so reluctant. But a lurid red belt and bag—where was the prudence or sense in squandering hard-earned money on such a thing?

"Leave me buy you something more usefuler, Ramah."

"Them 's useful enough. They just match my red

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dress," Ramah answered, with that mild persistency of hers which Christian was beginning to find most irritating.

"You spend everything at the clo'es, Ramah!" he rebuked her.

"Will you leave me borry the loan of seventy-five off of you, Krist?" she repeated.

"Leave me buy you such a ninety-nine cent store clock," Christian suggested.

"All right. But will you leave me borry the loan of them seventy-five?"

"Would you sooner have that there bag and belt than a clock, where 's so useful?" he demanded.

"I ain't astin' you to give me a present of this here belt and bag. I 'm only astin' you to leave me lend the price of it off of you. Will you?"

"Well, if you think your pop won't say I had n't ought to have left you spend so," Christian rather shamefacedly consented.

They had occupied so much time in the shops that there was not much left for the fair.

On the drive home Christian was low-spirited and had not much to say; but Ramah's whole personality exhaled her deep but quiet satisfaction in the purchases she was taking home.

"Do you think, Ramah, that when you 're married oncet, you 'd be wantin' to spend everything at the

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

clo'es?" Christian rather sullenly asked of her, when they had ridden for a long space in silence.

"If I could n't spend at the clo'es after I was married, I would n't be much for gettin' married," quietly answered Ramah.

Christian gave his mare a cut with the whip which sent her bounding along on the road at her greatest speed.

Ramah gasped. "Well, Krist, but you *are!*" she mildly reproved him.

"I don't see," growled Christian, "how you ever can wear *out* so many dresses still."

"Well, when I overgrow my clo'es or get tired of 'em still, I give 'em to my little sister where ain't outgrown yet, and *she* fits 'em."

"And if we was married," Christian burst forth, his feelings getting the better of his prudence, "would you think I 'd buy you clo'es to give over to your *sister*? Well, I 'd *see* myself, Ramah Smucher!"

"You ain't never ast me straight out would I marry you, Krist," Ramah gently suggested.

Christian suddenly found himself in a tight corner. He moved uneasily in his seat and swallowed hard. For a moment the only sound which broke the embarrassing silence between them was the stamp of the mare's hoofs on the road.

"The road 's nice for drivin' this evening, ain't?"

## The Narrow Escape of Permillia

he presently said in a rather feeble voice. "Last time I was on the buggy it was so muddy I could n't drive through any more."

Ramah made no answer. Christian realized uncomfortably what impatience she must feel with him for so signally failing to rise to her bait.

"You ain't so young yet, neither, Ramah," he said defensively—"about twenty-two."

Ramah was silent.

"Ain't you about twenty-two?"

"I have objections of telling," stiffly answered Ramah.

"Well, it don't matter anything," conceded Christian.

"Then what did you bring it up for?"

"Well," stammered this "truthful James," "I want to show that mebbe I had my reasons, too, for hesitatin'."

"Krist," Ramah said pathetically, "it 's hard work makes me look some older to what I *am*. I 'm workin' early and late still, and you know that makes somepin' at the looks."

"Yes," said Christian, a little mollified.

The rest of the drive passed without any further discord; but when, at six o'clock, they reached the Smucher farm, Christian had the prudence to decline to come in to supper, for he was convinced that he had

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

already gone too far with Ramah unless he was sure he meant to marry her.

Ramah was evidently chagrined at his firm refusal to her urgent invitation.

"Are you spited at me, Krist, for somepin'?" she asked as she stood at the gate while he held the bridle, ready to get into the buggy again after having helped her out and given her bundles to her brother, who had come out.

"No," answered Christian. "I 'll wait here, Ramah, while you get that seventy-five cents off your pop."

"I can give that to you when you come over next Saturday evening to set up with me."

"All right," Krist agreed; but as he jumped into his buggy he made a swift mental calculation. He had fortunately forgotten to hand out, with the other bundles, the ninety-nine cent store clock which he had bought her, and he now determined that until he got that seventy-five cents which she owed him he would not give up the clock.

"Good-by, Ramah," he hastily said, gathering up his reins quickly; and before she could answer him his mare had responded to the slap of the reins and was dashing down the road toward his father's gate.

# The Narrow Escape of Permilla

## III

### THE RETURN TO SALLIE

AFTER duly weighing the matter, Christian decided that Sallie Cougenhauer's idleness was not quite so grave a drawback to matrimony as was Ramah Smucher's extravagance in dress. He would return to Sallie.

"She 's anyways better company," thought Christian, with satisfaction.

He knew that his desertion of Sallie for Ramah had made both him and Sallie the subjects of unpleasant comment in the neighborhood. His attentions to Ramah had gone even further than those to Sallie, but he hoped that his virtue in returning to Sallie would counteract the effect of what he realized would be considered his dastardly behavior in giving up Ramah after having actually taken her to the county fair.

"It 's a difference in girls, too," he heavily pondered as he made his way one Saturday evening, three weeks after the trip to the fair, to the Cougenhauer farm. "A body would n't of thought it could be such a difference in girls as what there is."

He had, of course, allowed a decent interval of time between his desertion of Ramah and his return to Sallie.

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

He did not feel very much embarrassed at the idea of facing Sallie after his season of unfaithfulness. "She 'll be wonderful glad to see me again," was his confident thought, feeling at the same time a pang of pity for poor lonely, deserted Ramah.

"I 'll ast Sallie to come walk on the cemetery, and I 'll ast her right aways to pass me her promise to get married as soon as she otherwise can."

His pleasant contemplation of Sallie's gratified surprise in this unexpected good fortune made his walk across the fields very short indeed.

What, then, was his chagrin to find Sallie seated on the front porch with Ramah's brother Ebenezer, the whole aspect and attitude of the two manifesting the unmistakable fact that they were "keeping comp'ny."

He quickly reflected, however, that Sallie must surely prefer to take him back if she got the chance, rather than marry Ebenezer, who was one of four children, while he, Christian, was the only son of the richest farmer of the township. So he boldly opened the gate and walked up to the pair on the porch. He could see the laughter in Sallie's eyes and the broad grin on Ebenezer's mouth as he drew near; but in a few minutes, he felt confident, Ebenezer would be laughing "on the other side of his face," for Christian meant to settle without any delay the question as to which of them Sallie would have.

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

"Well, Sallie!" he greeted her as he stood at the porch steps. "Well, Ebenezer!"

"Well, Krist!" they both answered.

"I thought I 'd come over oncet, Sallie."

"Did you want to see pop and mom, Krist?" jocosely asked Sallie.

"No; I come to see you."

"Did you, now?" Sallie asked, raising her eyes in mock astonishment. "What 's your urrand, Krist?"

"It ain't no urrand. I come to set up."

Sallie's brows went up a bit higher. "Why, I thought you was settin' up Saturdays with Ramah Smucher! I heard it put out that you took her to the fair Mondays three weeks back."

"I guess," said Christian, feeling awkward in the presence of Ramah's brother, "me and Ramah seen we 'd made a mistake."

"Like what me and you seen we 'd made, Krist?"

"I feel now, Sallie, I never made no mistake in comin' to see you. And," he boldly announced, "I 've came back."

"And that 's your second mistake, Krist. And, you know, a mistake is no haystack or everyone would have a cow."

"Sallie, I tell you right now I don't feel I 'm makin' no mistake this time. I pass you my promise."

## The Narrow Escape of Permillia

“You think you was mistaken in thinkin’ you was mistaken?” laughed Sallie. “But *I* don’t think I was mistaken, Krist, when I preferred Ebenezer to you. Me and Ebenezer ’s promised this two weeks a’ready.”

“But you dare have *me*, Sallie,” heartily urged Christian, his zeal in his quest getting the better of his compassion for Ebenezer. “Ebenezer he knows I had first chancet, and he has the right to give you back to me.”

Sallie threw back her pretty head and screamed with laughter, and Ebenezer joined her with a shout of mirth, the occasion of which Christian could not see.

“*Dare* I have you, Krist?” Sallie chokingly asked.

“Yes, willingly.”

“Well, Krist, I ’m much obliged. But you dare n’t have *me*.”

“Is it you ’re afraid of makin’ Ebenezer mad, Sallie?”

“It ’s that I don’t want *you*.”

“Is it you want to be coaxed that way, Sallie?”

“Coaxin’ would n’t do you no good, Krist.”

“You know how good fixed I am—better ’n Ebenezer.”

“If you was hung with gold dollars and Ebenezer was in rags, I ’d take *him*.”

## The Narrow Escape of Permillá

Christian stared at her, his eyes bulging. "What fer, Sallie?" he asked, in genuine wonder.

"Because," spoke up Ebenezer, "I 'm a man and not a pig."

"Och, you 're just mad that I ain't settin' up with Ramah no more," retorted Christian. "But she spends everything at the clo'es."

"Well," cried Ebenezer, "the people says *your* folks is so mean that when they set down to eat, they 're so fer savin', they won't eat theirselves done."

"Sallie,"—Christian turned to appeal to her,—"*is* it that you want to be coaxed?"

"Krist, I said I was promised to Ebenezer. But if I was n't promised to no one, I would n't marry *you*. It 's like what Ebenezer says: you ain't no *man*, Krist. I pity you,—you 're a poor body,—but I ain't marryin' you for my pity."

Christian could hardly believe his ears. He was, in the eyes of her whom he meant to honor with his name, "a poor body," the object of her pity!

"I don't understand you, Sallie."

"Go home and sleep on it," suggested Ebenezer. "Mebbe till morning a'ready you 'll take a tumble to yourself."

"Sallie, I ast you now, for the last time, will you come walk on the cemetery and let 's settle this here?"

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

"I ain't got nothin' to talk out with you, Krist. I 'm promised to Ebenezer."

"I 'll give you one more chancet. Are you comin'? Or I 'll go right down back to Ramah this here night."

Again Ebenezer and Sallie shouted with laughter.

"Ramah 's out buggy-ridin' with Jake Gochen-hauer. He 's been her steady comp'ny since the first Saturdays you did n't go over to set up with her," Sallie informed him.

"And if you go tryin' to sneak back to *her*," threatened Ebenezer, "it won't take pop long to tell you to go right straight on off."

"Yes, anyhow," warmly assented Sallie. "I guess! Why, Krist, you 're wonderful *dumn* (stupid), thinkin' a girl would take you back after your actin' like what you acted by Ramah."

"Well, she knows now it was a good riddance," said Ebenezer.

"Yes, anyhow," responded Sallie, with as much indignation as her abundant good nature could muster.

Christian, his brain dizzy with a set of impressions of himself and others too novel to be quickly digested, turned away and walked back to the gate.

# The Narrow Escape of Permilla

## IV

### PERMILLA

CHRISTIAN was humbled, but not crushed. After a few days of bewildered wonder at the unlooked-for turn which events had taken, he rallied sufficiently to plan a signal revenge upon his enemies and detractors. He would "spite" them both—Sallie and Ramah—by straightway marrying Permilla Gumpf!

He almost gasped at his own rashness as he set about carrying out this plan. Permilla's father had died two months before, and had left his wife and four children without any support. Permilla and her mother would have to slave day and night to make their rented farm pay expenses and keep them from starving. Christian knew that if he married Permilla, he would be expected to do something for her mother and little brothers and sisters to "help along." Nevertheless, he did not falter in his purpose. He had always liked Permilla. *She*, at least, could appreciate what a good thing she was getting, which was what Sallie and Ramah seemed incapable of doing. And she had the virtues, he knew, which each of the other girls lacked: she was as industrious as Sallie was idle and as economical as Ra-

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

mah was extravagant. These two extenuating circumstances, together with her profound and just admiration of himself,—for Christian had long enjoyed the pleasing consciousness of Permilla's evident though unexpressed passion for him,—made him overlook her poverty and the humble station of the Gumpfs as “renters.”

So when on the next Saturday night, clad in his Sunday suit, he walked up the road to the Gumpfs' rented farm, he quite swelled with the delightful anticipation of seeing Permilla overwhelmed with gratitude and happiness at his condescension.

“I can love her better 'n I could ever of loved either of them other two,” he told himself.

He met Permilla before he reached her door. She was gathering early apples in the orchard a little distance from the house. He observed, as he jumped the fence and walked toward her, that she was dressed as he had never seen her before: her gown was new, well-fitting and pretty, and she wore a most fetching hat instead of the sunbonnet usually on her head. He marveled at this unexpected change in her appearance. He knew he had never before seen her look so pretty, and he was sure she was a great deal better-looking than either Sallie or Ramah.

She stopped her work and looked up in surprise as he came toward her.

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

"Well, Permilla!"

"Why, Krist!"

"How are you this evening?"

"I 'm pretty good. How 's yourself, Krist?"

"I 'm pretty good, too. Are you busy this evening?"

"Och, no; I 'm just getting some apples while I 'm—I 'm waitin'. Are you on your way over to Sallie Cougenhauer's, Krist?"

"No, Permilla; I 'm on my way to see *you*," he reassured her, with an encouraging smile.

"Oh!" said Permilla, her eyes opening wide. "Then let 's go through the orchard over, and come insides, will you?"

"Yes; I would n't care to."

"Is it so, Krist, that Ramah Smucher 's promised to Jake Gochenhauer?" Permilla's gentle voice asked as they walked through the orchard.

"I don't know," shortly answered Christian. "You 're lookin' wonderful good this evening, Permilla. You 're some stouter."

"Yes; I 'm takin' on *speck* (fat), mom says."

Christian wondered that the death of her father should have agreed so well with her health. He had expected to find her pale and wan and worn out; but he had never seen her so blooming.

"That 's a pretty hat you 're wearin' on yourself,

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

Permilla. Did you get it a present?" he curiously inquired.

"No; I just got it *so*—to wear on pop's funeral, you know. It 's just my old hat fixed around. It had such red currants on it, and, to be sure, that would n't suit on a funeral, and I said to mom, 'I want to wear myself that looks a little *according*—no such red currants,' I said. So I ast Ramah Smucher would she please and take my hat to town when she is going two days before the funeral. Well, don't you think, Krist, she took it with—and then when she come home she did n't have it along, and the day after to-morrow was the funeral yet. I was so sick she has n't got my hat when she come from town! And then Abe *he* went in special and fetched it. And it looks so nice; the people on the funeral don't believe on *me* it 's my old hat fixed around. I can't tell right what these here flowers on it is," she added dubiously. "White daisies or narcissus—*what* is it?"

"What did it cost you to have it fixed around?" speculatively asked Christian.

"One thirty-nine," answered Permilla; "and it 's as good as new."

"Who 's Abe?" Christian inquired.

"Oh," blushed Permilla, "Abe *he* 's—why, he 's Abe Schwarz that lives at Klupp's Church over."

"Was it *him* brought your hat with?"

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

“Yes,” briefly answered Permilla. “You must n’t mind the way things is tore up at our house, Krist,” she abruptly changed the subject. “We ’re repairing up the house and barn, and it gives such a dirt.”

Christian stared at her in astonishment. “You ’re repairin’ up the house and barn?” he repeated incredulously.

“Yes; we ’re pretty good fixed now, Krist. When pop died, his brother, my uncle Adam Gumpf, came from Alaska home, and he give mom some money to live on.”

Christian’s face beamed as he turned it upon Permilla.

“Then your mom can buy you a *aus styer* yet, ain’t —when you get married?”

“Oh, yes,” eagerly answered Permilla.

“Them ’s pretty beads you ’re wearin’ on yourself, Permilla. Does the locket come open? Mebbe I might give you a wisp of my hair to put in—ain’t?”

Permilla hastily covered the trinket with her little brown hand. “It ’s so funny to open, Krist; I don’t try, still, to open it.”

“Permilla,”—Christian took her small hand in his big clumsy one as they slowly strolled through the orchard,—“the first house that ’s getting empty I ’m renting.”

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

"Are you gettin' married too, Krist?"

"Yes, Permilla," he answered, pressing the hand he held.

"Who to, Krist?" Permilla inquired drawing away her hand.

"A girl that lives wonderful clost by," facetiously answered Krist, reaching to take her hand again; but she held it out of his reach.

"Is it Sallie Cougenhauer?"

"No; it *ain't* Sallie Cougenhauer. Guess again, Permilla!"

"If it ain't Ramah or Sallie, I don't know *whoever*."

"There 's somebody better 'n either of them two, Permilla!"

"Livin' clost by?" wonderingly asked Permilla.

"As clost as she otherwise *could* live."

"Why, Krist! there ain't no girl livin' nearer than Sallie and Ramah."

"There 's yourself, Permilla!"

Christian gazed at her in triumph and shouted with laughter.

"*You 're* goin' to be my girl, Permilla. I 'm mar-ryin' *you*. I like you wonderful much. And I was goin' to ast you before I knowed your Uncle Adam was on and give yous all somepin' to live on."

"But, Krist—"



Illustration by J. H. P. 1890

Christian Yundt learns his value in the matrimonial market



## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

“How much is it your Uncle Adam give yous?”

“That ’s neither here nor there, Krist, because—”

“I ain’t changin’ my mind any if he don’t give you *nothin’*,” magnificently declared Christian. “I want to get married to you right aways, no matter whatever.”

“Thank you, Krist, but—”

“How soon could you get ready to be married, Permilla?”

“I *am* ready, Krist; I ’m getting married—”

“Would n’t you have to do some sewin’ first?”

“It ’s all done. I ’m gettin’ married next Saturdays.”

“I don’t know if I can make it suit *that* quick a’ready, Permilla; but mebbe till next Saturdays a week a’ready.”

“I ’m gettin’ married next Saturdays, Krist.”

“Och, well,” said Christian, a little surprised, “if you ’re so set on Saturdays, I guess I can hurry.”

“I ’ll be pleased to have your comp’ny at my weddin’, Krist.”

Christian laughed at the joke. “It would be a funny weddin’ without the mister, ain’t? Well, I ’ll be there, Permilla,” he assured her jocosely.

“I ’m gettin’ married next Saturdays a’ready to Abe Schwarz from Klupp’s Church over,” firmly and clearly announced Permilla.

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

Christian stopped short in the path leading up to the house door. His face flamed red and his small eyes sparkled like beads.

"What 's that you sayed?"

"I 'm gettin' married to Abe Schwarz from Klupp's Church over, next Saturdays."

"You 're promised to Abe Schwarz!"

"Yes, Krist."

Permilla stood before him in the path and looked at him with shy pride.

"Would n't you ruther have me, Permilla?" he feebly inquired.

"I 'm wonderful fond of Abe, Krist. And he 's so good fixed—he 'll make me such a good provider."

"Yes," hoarsely granted Christian; "he 's wonderful well fixed—even better 'n me. Who'd o' thought," he added, in growing amazement, "that *Abe Schwarz* would be makin' up to *you*? Why, he could have 'most anybody—good fixed like what he is and so educated yet! I 'd o' thought he would n't have no one but an Ann-wille graduate!"

"He 'd ruther have me," with humble pride answered Permilla.

"But, Permilla, you *would* of had me of I 'd spoke soon enough—ain't it so, you would?"

"Well, Krist," she timidly answered, "two months back a'ready I might of, mebbe. But I heard since

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

how you was so near that way with your money, and how your pop and mom was always so good to you and did n't never make you mind, but give you every will, and that made you so conceity by yourself that you was n't easy to live with no more. And I says to myself, 'Them things don't bring happiness.' And then I did n't think so much about you no more, Krist, like what I used to still. And then, to be sure, when Abe begin to come and keep comp'ny with me, I liked him so well and I felt so wonderful satisfied that nothin' else did n't make nothin' to me."

"Do you mean you would n't have me even if you was n't promised to Abe Schwarz?" asked Christian, unsteadily.

"No, Krist, I would n't," firmly answered Permilla. "I 'm sorry for you, Krist. I hope it don't hurt you in your feelin's. But—but I took such a *kreistled* (disgusted) feeling toward you."

Christian caught his breath; but, before he could answer, Permilla started with a sudden exclamation as the distant sound of buggy wheels fell on the evening stillness.

"Och, here comes Abe's buggy the road up! Will you come in and see him, Krist, for a minute?"

"No."

"Won't you wait and bid Abe the time?"

"No."

## The Narrow Escape of Permilla

Christian turned his back on her and walked out of the gate.

Permilla watched his broad-shouldered figure disappear into the dimness of the long pike, feeling with a great throbbing of her heart what a different fate would have been hers if he had asked her to marry him "two months back," when her feelings toward him had been so different.

"Abe Schwarz will make me so much better a provider and he 's so much nicer a person!" exultingly thought Permilla.

And Christian, going home in the summer twilight, fully realized, for the first time in his young manhood, that the feminine mind held a view of Christian Yundt and his value in the matrimonial market quite other than that which he himself had been falsely cherishing ever since the day on which he had first touched a razor to his sleek, self-satisfied countenance.

## THE COURTING OF PEARLY



## THE COURTING OF PEARLY

IT was beginning to be "put out" in Stumpstown that Pearly Schwenkfelder was "promised" to Adam Hoofstittler, and as gossip in Stumpstown traveled fast it soon reached the ears of even Simon Flick, who, though only a young man in his twenties, mingled so little with his fellow villagers and so strictly "minded to his own business," that much of the village news was apt to pass him by.

This item came to Simon with a sharp sting.

He found it impossible, the afternoon that he heard the news, to work in his blacksmith shop. With what appeared to his apprentice an alarming recklessness, he announced, an hour after his return to the shop, that he was going out for a while and would leave the apprentice alone in charge of the business; and then, flinging himself outdoors, he strode down the road as fast as his slightly lame foot would allow him to go.

To know that Pearly was "promised" to another

## The Courting of Pearly

man was anguish enough. But to know that the man was Adam Hoofstittler was nothing short of maddening. For Pearly's own sake, because Simon loved her, he would save her from a union so fatal to her happiness—to the happiness of any woman. But mingled with the passion of his love for her was another passion almost as fierce—his detestation of Adam.

It had begun away back in their school-days, when Adam, who was the bully of the school, used to make pretty little Pearly cry by taunting Simon with his "game leg" and then, right in Simon's presence, seizing Pearly and kissing her until her tears were turned to laughter. Sometimes Simon's rage would get the better of his prudence, and he would try to fight Adam, who was twice his size. Of course, poor Simon always came out beaten. Once, a quarrel that had been entirely provoked by Adam led to Simon's suspension from school for a month, because, Adam's father being a school-director, the teacher felt it prudent to take his part.

A climax had come one night at a party to which Simon had escorted Pearly when she was a blooming, bewitching maiden of sixteen. Simon at that time had been too poor to hire a sleigh to take her to the party, but he and Pearly, who was very fond of him, had enjoyed the moonlight walk over the crisp snow

## The Courting of Pearly

with all the keenness of their youth. It was when the party was over and she and Simon were stepping out of the house to walk home together, both of them with sweet anticipations of the pleasure of their long, moonlight walk, that Adam had suddenly come up behind them and with a roar of laughter thrust Simon roughly aside, lifted Pearly bodily in his arms, set her in his own sleigh, and driven off with her. Simon had slipped on the ice when Adam pushed him and had given his lame foot a wrench that had made his almost unnoticeable lameness conspicuous for the rest of his life.

For many days after this party Simon, laid up with his injured foot and kept from the work by which he supported his widowed mother and himself, waited in vain for some word of apology or regret from Pearly. He rose from his bed at the end of a month, a hardened and a bitter man, in the very flush of his young manhood.

This stolid moroseness, with which, after many years, he had become impregnated, left even himself deceived as to the passions still alive in him—until a revelation of himself was made to him in the news of Adam's betrothal to Pearly.

"Mebbe it ain't so, fur all!" he was saying to himself as he strode up the village street, in the warm April afternoon, his head hanging forward, his hands

## The Courting of Pearly

clasped behind him. "How could Pearly look fur happiness married to *him*—she knows how ugly-dispositioned he is!"

A heavy footstep on the otherwise noiseless street made him look up—to see Adam himself coming toward him. In his customary blustering tone, Adam hailed him:

"Hello, Game-leg! What are *you* starin' at? I hope you 'll mebbe know me next time you see me!"

Simon found himself strangely impervious to-day to the taunt which in his sensitive boyhood had so tortured him. As he walked on up the street, he continued to consider, heavily, what there was in Adam that could attract Pearly.

"He 's a good-looker," he acknowledged to himself with an icy chill at his heart as he thought of his own maimed member and of his general physical inferiority to the stalwart, broad-shouldered Adam. "And, to be sure, that makes somepin,' too, to a girl—as much as it does to a man if a *girl* 's a good-looker. And he 's well fixed. He 'd purvide good fur her. Better 'n me—fur all I 'm well fixed, too, now. But I was n't till a little while back yet, and Adam he always was. If I thought there was any chanct fur me, I 'd try to cut him out, even yet!"

His steps had led him half unconsciously toward Pearly's home. He had never looked at or spoken to

## The Courting of Pearly

her since that night she had been snatched from him at the party, but he knew to-day that his boyish love for her had never died, and that she was the only woman in the world whom he would ever want to marry.

Pearly was the only child of the people who kept the station restaurant and the village grocery store.

As Simon reached the sidewalk in front of Mr. Schwenkfelder's yellow frame house, his ear was caught and thrilled by the sound of Pearly's voice singing in the front room to an accompaniment on her cabinet organ. He stopped short and listened.

“When the pearly gates unfold  
for you and me!”

were the words which floated to him from the “best front room.”

“I ’ll go in oncet and get a plate of ice-cream or what!” he resolved with a thumping of his heart that fairly made his knees shake.

The restaurant opened into the parlor where Pearly sat, and he could see her plump, pretty figure at the organ as he took his place at one of the oil-cloth covered tables of the small eating-room.

There were no other customers present. The “hired girl” who was in attendance came at once to

## The Courting of Pearly

take his order. Simon looked about at the printed signs which covered the walls:

“Sarsaparilla, five cents”; “Ginger-ale, five cents”; “Ice-cream, five and ten cents”; “Oyster stews, fifteen cents”; “Ham and X, twenty cents.”

The last sign was a concession to the Pennsylvania Dutch pronunciation of “ham and eggs.”

“I ’ll take a glass of sassafarilla,” he said.

While he waited, his eyes feasting upon the unconscious object of his ardor, Pearly struck up another song. The quite heartrending words were warbled to an accompaniment that was inappropriately jaunty. The song tragically told of the early death of a maiden whose lover, in his despairing grief, pined away and shortly followed her to “her tomb in the walley.”

“In the walley, in the walley!”

Pearly shrilly sang the chorus:

“In the walley they laid him by her side!”

Perhaps Pearly felt the intensity of thought and emotion directed to her from Simon’s excited mind, for she suddenly stopped short, turned on the red plush organ-stool, and fully met his gaze fixed upon her from the room beyond.

Her face went pale as she saw him. For an instant



“Pearly struck up another song”



## The Courting of Pearly

she hesitated, while Simon's eyes seemed to hold her spellbound. Then suddenly she rose, came quickly forward, and entered the eating-room. There was a bright look of excitement in her face and a soft delight about the smile of her full lips that made Simon's head swim.

"Why, Si! Did *you* come oncet!" she exclaimed, seating herself opposite him, leaning her elbows on the table and her cheeks on the back of her hands. "I think it can't be! You 're a wonderful stranger! Ain't you are?"

"I felt fur a drink of sassafarilla, it 's such a hot day," said Simon, growing red with his embarrassment in explaining his presence.

He sipped his glass to cover his sense of awkwardness. Every nerve in him was tingling with delight at Pearly's nearness. She did not speak again at once, but sat looking at him in silence. What should he say to her? What had he really come here for? Was there any least use in the world of his trying to cut out Adam Hoofstittler at this late stage of the game? That look of pleasure with which she had come forward to greet him—could he dare to take hope from it?

Pearly made a slight restless movement in her chair, and a fear seized him that she would rise and leave him.

"I did n't know, Pearly, that you 'd learned to

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play and sing so good," he quickly said. "You 're a wonderful pretty singer."

"Yes, I know a good bit about music. I took twenty-four lessons fur five dollars off the Evangelical preacher's daughter."

"I like to hear you sing, 'When the pearly gates.' It minds me of *you*!"

"Do you think? Because my name 's Pearly, ain't?" she asked, smiling and blushing. "You always was so fond fur my name, still, ain't you was, Si? Pop, too," she nodded. "Pop he give me my name. He seen it oncet in such a 'Family Story Paper,' and he always thought such a heap of that name!"

"I, too," said Simon.

"It 's a wonder, Si, you could be away from work in the middle of the day yet!" Pearly remarked.

"I ain't got much time," said Simon confusedly. "What time it is, Pearly?"

She drew a tiny gold watch from her bosom and held it toward him. "It 's half past twelf."

"Well," said Simon, "I don't have to get back till a half hour a'ready. Did your pop give you that wonderful handsome watch, Pearly?" he asked; for all Stumpstown knew that, to her father, Pearly, his only child, was the very core of his heart, and that he delighted to "spend on her."

## The Courting of Pearly

“N—no,” answered Pearly, her eyes falling. “I—I came by this watch.”

She did not need to explain. Adam Hoofstittler had surely given her the watch.

“Last Sundays, Si,” she hastily added, “I thought I have saw you walk on the cemetery. Was it you? I was there with—I was walking on the cemetery, too”; she changed her statement with a self-conscious look and tone that made Simon’s heart sink lower.

“Yes, I was walkin’ on the cemetery,” he dully answered. “I did n’t take notice to you walkin’ there.”

“Did you come on a funeral, Si?”

“No, I just come *so*.”

“I thought you mebbe had came on the funeral of that party where was ninety-nine years old and was brought from Bethlehem over. I seen the remains. There was nothin’ but skin and bones at him!”

“Now think!” said Simon.

“Indeed, yes!” sighed Pearly. “It used to make me feel funny to look at them awful thin remains!”

“It was a pity of him,” said Simon perfunctorily.

The topic was neither savory nor fruitful, and conversation here flagged a trifle.

Simon wrestled with a desperate temptation to put his fate to an immediate test, demand of Pearly whether she were really “promised” to Adam, and

## The Courting of Pearly

discover at once whether she could give him any hope.

"You 're lookin' well, Si. Only a little older," the girl remarked.

"You 're lookin' good, too, Pearly. Only I can't say you 're lookin' any older. Say, Pearly!"

"What, Si?"

"Why did n't you never write to me when I was laid up after that party where Adam Hoofstittler fetched you away from me?"

Pearly's fair face and neck flushed a deep pink as she gazed at him with wide eyes of surprise.

"Si, I was just a-goin' to ast *you* why you never come to see me or ast fur me when I had so sick after that there sleigh-ride with Adam!"

"*I* never heard you had sick, Pearly!"

"I had sick of typhoid fever. It was the day after the party, and I believe I was washing dishes, or what I was doing—when I got it so in my head! I went to bed, and the doctor he did n't know what it would give yet, but till a day or two it give typhoid fever. I had to do seven weeks with it, and it turned me all over! And when I got some better, the first thing I ast was if Si was here ever. And when they sayed no, only Adam, and they sayed how all the time I had sick, Adam he was so kind that way—then I did n't know what *to* think no more!"

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"Pearly! I never knowed you had sick! I was laid up with my foot, and no person never tole me you had the fever!"

"Now, *Si!*" Pearly half gasped. "You don't mean to say you never knowed!"

"Pearly!" called a voice from the grocery store on the other side of the eating-room, "what you do?"

It was the voice of her father, and it was followed by his portly appearance in the doorway.

"What you do, Pearly?"

"Nothin', pop."

"Well, then," he jocularly admonished her, "stop it!"

He roared with laughter at his own wit as he stood in his shirt-sleeves, his fat palms resting on his hips, his red cheeks shaking with his mirth.

"Why, *Si!*" he exclaimed in surprise as he recognized the young man. "What brung *you* along yet?"

Simon felt, in Mr. Schwenkfelder's surprised greeting, an overwhelming sense of embarrassment in his fear lest the purpose of his visit be manifest to Pearly's father. Could he once be persuaded that she cared more for him than for Adam, he would brave her father, Adam, and all the village in his endeavors to win her. But so long as he was in doubt, his confusion and timidity ruled him.

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"It gets late on me, and I must go," he said, rising abruptly.

"Well, good-by, Si," said Pearly, a wistful note in her voice that set his pulse to bounding. He lifted his downcast eyes and looked at her.

"Mebbe I might come, a little while after supper, down," he suggested. "Would my comp'ny be acceptable, Pearly?"

"I 'd enjoy your comp'ny much, Si," she blushing answered.

"Ain't you lookin' fur Adam Hoofstittler over?" he blurted out.

"He—he has to go up behind Reading this after," she faltered.

"And when the cat 's away the mice 'll play, heh?" hilariously shouted Mr. Schwenkfelder. "Ain't, Si?"

Simon hardly knew, as, only half conscious of the ground under his feet, he limped homeward, whether he ought to feel elated or discouraged at Pearly's invitation, since it was given because Adam would be out of town. Was Pearly only wanting to trifle with him? Just what it might signify as to Pearly's true sentiments, Simon pondered heavily all the rest of the day, until at nightfall he again found himself, with alternate hope and misgiving, walking up the village street toward Schwenkfelder's restaurant.

## The Courting of Pearly

Pearly was sitting on the front porch, most fetchingly dressed in a white frock with pink ribbons on it.

"I 'm that glad to see you, Si!" she greeted him; "come here and set down on the porch, side by each!"

"I brung you a present, Pearly," Simon boldly plunged in when he had taken the chair at her side. "Will you accept it off of me?"

"Oh, Si! I don't know if I had ought to. What fur present is it?" she inquired, with eyes of eager curiosity on the package in his hand.

This "present" was a test on Simon's part. If she accepted it from him, she was surely not "promised" to another. Such an act would be counted by Stumpstown standards as nothing short of stealing. It would be getting goods on false pretenses.

Simon removed the wrapping paper and brought forth a large volume, the title of which appeared in gilt letters on the brown imitation-of-leather cover.

Roses and Thorns of Paris and London.  
That Lessons may be learned therefrom,  
Influencing to Shun Evil and Admire  
Virtue.

"I bought it off of such a agent last week," he ex-

## The Courting of Pearly

plained; "and to-night I conceited I 'd fetch it with—and give it a present to you, Pearly. It 's got pictures all through. It cost me four ninety-eight."

"Now, think!" cried Pearly admiringly. "I never had a book where cost that much. It 's wonderful handsome, Si; Saddy!" (Thank you.)

"I 'm glad you like it, Pearly."

"I like it wonderful, Si."

"Then ain't you promised to Adam Hoofstittler, Pearly?"

Simon's heart beat thick in his breast as he asked the crucial question.

Pearly started and blushed very red in her confusion.

"I ain't just to say *promised*, Si. But—but we 're in with each other wonderful thick."

"But you ain't promised?"

"No—not just to say that. But," she faltered, her eyes downcast, "it ain't because Adam ain't *ast* me often enough."

"Pearly! Is it that you won't have him, or what?"

"I won't do it to say to him if I *will* or no. But—to be sure, me and Adam, us we 're awful well acquainted together that way. And in January I get twenty years old, and now pop and mom they say it 's time I marry oncet!"

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“And why won’t you say yes to Adam?” Simon asked huskily.

Pearly looked down and outlined with her fingers the letters on her book.

“I have a many reasons.”

“Won’t you tell ’em off to me?” Simon pleaded.

“I don’t think it would be nice in me to talk down on Adam as long as I leave him keep comp’ny with me.”

“Is it that you don’t know right what you do want, or whatever?”

“Well, Si,” answered Pearly, leaning a little nearer to him and lowering her voice confidentially, “sometimes I say to myself, ‘I sure won’t do it.’ And then again when Adam he plagues me so to have him, I don’t know what *to* think. But I pass it as my opinion a girl ought not to engage till she ’s sure.”

“Don’t you like him good enough?”

“I ’m afraid, Si, sometimes I don’t. Then again sometimes I think I could stand him pretty good—fur all he ’s so hard to do with and so ugly-dispositioned! And through the nose he talks—and that kreistles (disgusts) me. And he ’s so jealous—I darsent never even talk with other ones!”

“Is it—is it that you mebbe like someone else, Pearly?” Simon ventured.

Pearly nervously fingered her book and did not at

## The Courting of Pearly

once answer. But at last, without looking up, she said in a low voice:

“Mebbe that is it. I—I never could forget *you*, Si, and how much me and you enjoyed ourselves to be together!”

“Pearly!” Simon leant forward and clasped her hand. “Look at here! You give Adam the go-by and be *my* girl!”

“Oh, Si!” murmured Pearly, tears in her voice, “it don’t look nice if I travel with you now, after Adam! I ’d sooner have *you*, Si, ’deed I would—but it don’t do! It gives bad feelings to break away from your steady comp’ny like that. I would n’t know *how* to do it.”

“I ’ll easy tell you *how*, Pearly! When is Adam comin’ to set up with you again?”

“Monday dinners he comes, on his way to work, and sets an hour.”

“Well, you just tell him, when he comes, how you made up with Simon Flick, and you ’re goin’ to keep comp’ny now with *him*, and Adam he should go on home and stay. That ’s the way you can do it.”

“Oh, Si, he would n’t listen on me. And I would n’t half do that—I would n’t *half* send him home—when me and him ’s been keepin’ comp’ny so long a’ready!”

“Then let it to me. I ’ll go to see him and tell

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him!" Simon eagerly suggested, scenting a foretaste of his enjoyment in such a triumph over his hated, life-long tormentor and enemy.

"I would n't risk leavin' you do that!" said Pearly. "Adam, he 'd most likely up and fight you! You see, Si, no one can't easy get over (get ahead of) Adam—he 's so strong—and so quick-dispositioned. Oh!"

This sudden outcry was occasioned by the appearance at the porch steps of none other than the redoubtable Adam himself.

He was not dressed in his "Sunday suit," in which a young man of Stumpstown must always be clad when he calls on a young lady; he wore his every-day clothes and carried a small valise.

"Well, Pearly! I conceived I 'd stop on my way home and see how you was. I got home earlier than what I thought for."

He had mounted three of the four porch steps before he recognized the man who was sitting beside Pearly, for the evening had grown dark while Simon and Pearly had been talking together.

"Well, I 'm blamed, if it ain't Si Flick!" he exclaimed. "Hello, Club-foot, what are you doin' here?"

Simon Flick did not wince. He felt the cherished animosity of years fail him utterly.

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Neither he nor Pearly made any answer to Adam.

"Well—it 's time you limped along home, Si," Adam instructed him, "and give up your chair to *me*. I don't know what you 're doin' anyhow, settin' here with Pearly! Go on, now!"

Simon leaned back comfortably in his chair and fitted together the tips of his fingers. He did not speak.

"Do you hear?" cried Adam. "Pearly, shall I chase him off?" he half jocularly, half angrily asked. His tone expressed his perplexity at the silence of both of them.

"Adam Hoofstittler," Pearly answered him quietly, but with an unaccustomed force in her manner, "you 'd better chase *yourself* off if you can't treat my friend civil. Si was always my friend since I was a little girl yet, and you sha'n't affront him here!"

"He ain't been your friend fur as much as four years back a'ready!" Adam contradicted her, amazement getting the better of his usually ready anger at opposition.

"But he would of been if it had n't been fur you, Adam. I did n't know how you made him fall, and how he was laid up all the time I had sick—and it was all your doin's!"

"So them 's the things Simon 's been settin' here

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tellin' you, heh? Well, Pearly," he sarcastically suggested, "you better choose right now which of us two you 'll have then."

"Pearly!" Simon here became articulate. "Here 's your chanct. Choose between us *now!* Pearly, I pass you my word, if you choose me, I 'll never in all our lives together do anything to make you sorry you choosed me. I 'll use you as good as I otherwise can, Pearly!"

"Is the feller went crazy as well as club-footed?" cried Adam. "Pearly, what 's he talkin' anyhow?"

Pearly rose from her chair, and Simon quickly stood at her side. The girl laid her hand on his arm. "I choose you, Simon. And Adam, here 's your watch back again."

She took out her little gold timepiece and held it toward her rejected lover.

He did not take it. For an instant he glared at her, his eyes shining in the dimness with a concentrated anger that made her tremble, but before which she did not quail.

Suddenly—his face apoplectic with rage—he made a dash at Simon. But Simon had been watching for this—had he not known Adam Hoofstittler all his life long?—and having the advantage of standing a step higher on the porch than his antagonist, he met his onslaught with a quick, parrying blow which, taking

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Adam by surprise, hurled him backward to the pavement.

Instantly, however, he was on his feet again, and now, quite beside himself with fury, he rushed a second time upon Simon. Pearly, recklessly obeying her instinct to protect her chosen lover, stepped in front of him before he could prevent her—and it was she who received Adam's blow!

It would have struck her to the floor had not Simon caught her as she fell. Adam, heedless of his outrage to the girl, seized Simon by his collar to hurl him off—when he found himself grasped by the strong hand of Pearly's father.

"What you mean, doin' somepin' like this?" demanded Mr. Schwenkfelder furiously, his face crimson with mingled alarm for his daughter and anger at the man whom he had seen strike the blow.

"I did n't go to hit Pearly—you might know!" growled Adam, trying to shake himself free of Schwenkfelder's hand on his collar. But big and strong as Adam was, Mr. Schwenkfelder was his match.

"And when you 'd hit her, 'stead of bein' concerned fur her, you just kep' on tryin' to fight Simon, you coward! Well, this here settles *you*! I never did like you anyways, with your bullyin', braggin' ways! You can just take yourself off! and double quick, too, or I 'll set the dog on you!"

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"Ezra Schwenkfelder!" protested Adam, his own anger cooled before this unexpected encounter with Pearly's father; "you 'll sure think better of this here till morning a'ready; you 're some mad and don't know right what you 're sayin'! I 'm sorry if I hurt Pearly!"

He turned to the girl, whom Simon had helped to her chair. She was white and trembling, and her childish eyes were fixed upon Adam with fear and aversion.

"Pearly! I 'm wonderful sorry this here happened! It 's all because this here Simon Flick—"

"That 's like your cowardness!" exclaimed Mr. Schwenkfelder disgustedly, "to be blamin' someone else fur your own bullyin' and brutality!"

"I always knowed," panted Pearly, "that some day you 'd hit me, Adam! I felt you would some day! But I sure never conceited you 'd do it before we was married a'ready!"

"Clear out here, I tell you!" commanded Mr. Schwenkfelder, "and good riddance! I seen enough of you just now to make me know you ain't marryin' our Pearly if *I* can help!"

Adam, obeying perforce, turned his back on them all and stalked away.

An hour later Pearly, quite herself again after her fright, stood at the porch steps bidding Simon good-night.

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"Pearly!" he breathed ecstatically as he held both her hands in his, "to-night I done what I conceited to do since that night four years back, when Adam Hoofstittler spited me so wonderful by taking you away from me and carrying you home in his sleigh!"

"What was it, Si, that you 'd conceited to do?" Pearly shyly asked, prepared to feast on his honeyed words of long devotion to herself.

"I always conceited that no matter how long I 'd have to wait, I 'd some time get back at Adam Hoofstittler fur what he done to me! And to-night I have got back at him. To-night I 've did what I set out to do four years back and have thought about every day since! But I 've did even better 'n I planned fur, I 've took his girl off him! I never thought I could get *that* good a spite at him! And now," Simon added in deep-toned satisfaction, "I 'm contented!"

Pearly drew her hands from his and stepped back, her eyes fastened upon Simon with much the look of fear and aversion which she had turned upon Adam when she had sent him about his business an hour before.

"So that 's what you come here fur to-day!" she breathed. "That 's what you made love to me fur and ast me to be your girl!—so 's you could get your spite out of Adam! Not because you loved me, but

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because you wanted to get me loosed of Adam to spite him! Well, Simon Flick, you was wonderful dumb to *tell* me—fur now I 'd sooner be *six* old maids as marry you! I 'd sooner marry Adam than a man that ast me to marry him just so 's to spite another man!"

"But, Pearly—"

She had turned and rushed into the house before he could stop her.

Simon stood confounded. His head swam with the effect of this sudden revulsion of his joy to alarm and grief. What had he done? What had happened? Pearly lost to him! She would "sooner marry Adam." Simon passed his hand over his head and staggered down the street.

During a long, sleepless night he wrestled with his trouble. How could he make it right with Pearly and win her back? He realized that when on the next morning Adam should go to her in all the confidence of his strong self-esteem, she would most likely, in her disappointment in himself, take back her rejected lover; and yet, Simon knew that the pain he suffered in the thought of this was all for the loss of Pearly and scarcely at all for the triumph of Adam. Had he not then misrepresented himself to Pearly? Was his heart really so black with unchristian "spite" as he had himself supposed it to be? If he

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could prove to Pearly that it was not!—then all might even yet be well with him—unless his proof, coming after her reconciliation with Adam, was too late.

Next morning, as early as propriety would permit, Simon went to see Pearly. But it was as he had feared. He was too late. Adam was there ahead of him. The “hired girl” who answered his knock on the door told him so and handed him a folded sheet of paper.

Simon unfolded the paper and read:

“Friend. I don’t never want to see you no more, Simon, after what you spoke to me last night.

“PEARLY SCHWENKFELDER.”

The note crushed in his hand, Simon turned away, his face ashy.

But as the house door closed behind him, the restaurant door next to it opened, and Mr. Schwenkfelder stepped out.

“Si! I want to speak somepin’ to you!”

“What does Adam Hoofstittler mean, sneakin’ ’round here after what you sayed to him last night?” desperately demanded Simon.

“Yes, ain’t!” vigorously nodded Mr. Schwenkfelder. “Well, he did n’t take me serious. He thought

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I 'd be over it till this morning a'ready. But I meant it all right! I never did like him and his masterful ways. Missus she says, too, she 'd be better satisfied if Pearly took someone else. Missus she never did like Adam."

"And now are yous leavin' him come back to Pearly again after what passed between yous last night?"

"Well, Adam he come here this morning as if nothin' had happened, and he sayed he 'd come to ast a favor off of me, and he sayed he had the chanct to git the post-office of Stumpstown at three hundred dollars per annum by the year, if he could get a party to go on his bond fur one thousand dollars. Well, I sayed I would n't do it to go on his bond, fur I did that way oncet fur a man in a bank, and I lost. And I passed my promise then to missus I 'd never do it no more. Adam he did n't know no person else to ast. It ain't much people in Stumpstown has prop'ty to that amount, you know. Adam he 's a good bit spited at me. But he kep' it down on account of his wantin' Pearly so bad."

Simon was staring at him with a strange gleam in his eyes—the look of a man who sees a vision. He did not speak.

Mr. Schwenkfelder regarded him in perplexity. "What 's ailin' you, Si?" he demanded, nudging him

## The Courting of Pearly

with his elbow to arrest his attention. "You look like as if you was *seein'* things!"

"Pearly and Adam 's in the parlor, ain't?" Simon huskily asked.

"Yes, what d' you want, Si?"

"Leave me speak to 'em. I ain't raisin' no disturbance."

"*You* ain't, mebbe. But Adam is if he sees you, and I ain't havin' Pearly no more excited!"

"I 'm not a-goin' to excite her. I 'm a-goin' to make her peaceable."

"What are you goin' to do?"

"You can come with—and see," answered Simon, walking past the hesitating landlord into the house. Adam and Pearly were seated together on a haircloth sofa. Pearly's face was white, and her eyes downcast, and Adam was in an attitude of earnest exposition. The pair looked up in startled surprise. Pearly's white face grew flushed, and her lifeless eyes flashed upon Simon. Adam eyed the leading intruder aggressively.

Simon walked straight up to the sofa.

"Adam Hoofstittler"—he spoke in a tone of quiet dignity—"I come in here to say I 'd go on your bond fur you. I tole Pearly last night how I felt spiteful to you, and she throwed me over because of it. Now I 'm here to prove to her that my spite died out be-

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fore the sorrow of losing her. I ain't got no mean feelin's to you now, and I 'm provin' it by offerin' to risk the loss of them thousand dollars. Pearly!" he besought the girl, "will this prove to you that I love you true and honest and with all my heart?"

The flash in Pearly's eyes had changed to a soft glow. She rose from the sofa and laid her hand on Simon's arm.

"This is more 'n I 'd ast you to do, Si, to prove your love! I thought from the way you spoke last night it was only spite to him and not love to me that brung you to see me. I know different now, and that 's all that matters me anything. You have no need to go on Adam's bond. If I 'm to marry you, Si, I 'm sure I 'd sooner you 'd not risk that much!"

"It would easy-up my conscience if I done it," Simon responded. "It always troubled me a heap, still, how spiteful I could n't help feelin' to Adam, and it kep' me from joinin' on to church. I knowed them feelin's I had to him was n't right, but 'I could n't seem to help havin' 'em, and I did n't *want* to help it, neither! I can't take credit fur actin' good to Adam now, fur my mean feelin's to him is all gone, and it ain't no struggle to me. You see, Pearly, the power of love to cast out the devil!"

He clasped her hand in both his own, and the look

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in their faces made Mr. Schwenkfelder modestly turn his back.

“Come on out of here, Adam—me and you ain’t in it!” he exclaimed. “Good luck to you, Simon!” he called over his shoulder. “*I ’m satisfied all right!*”

“Look a-here, Pearly!” Adam, who had been sitting dumfounded, at last found voice to interpose. “I ain’t *takin’* his offer of his bond, and I ain’t leavin’ him take my girl off me if I have to lame his other leg fur—”

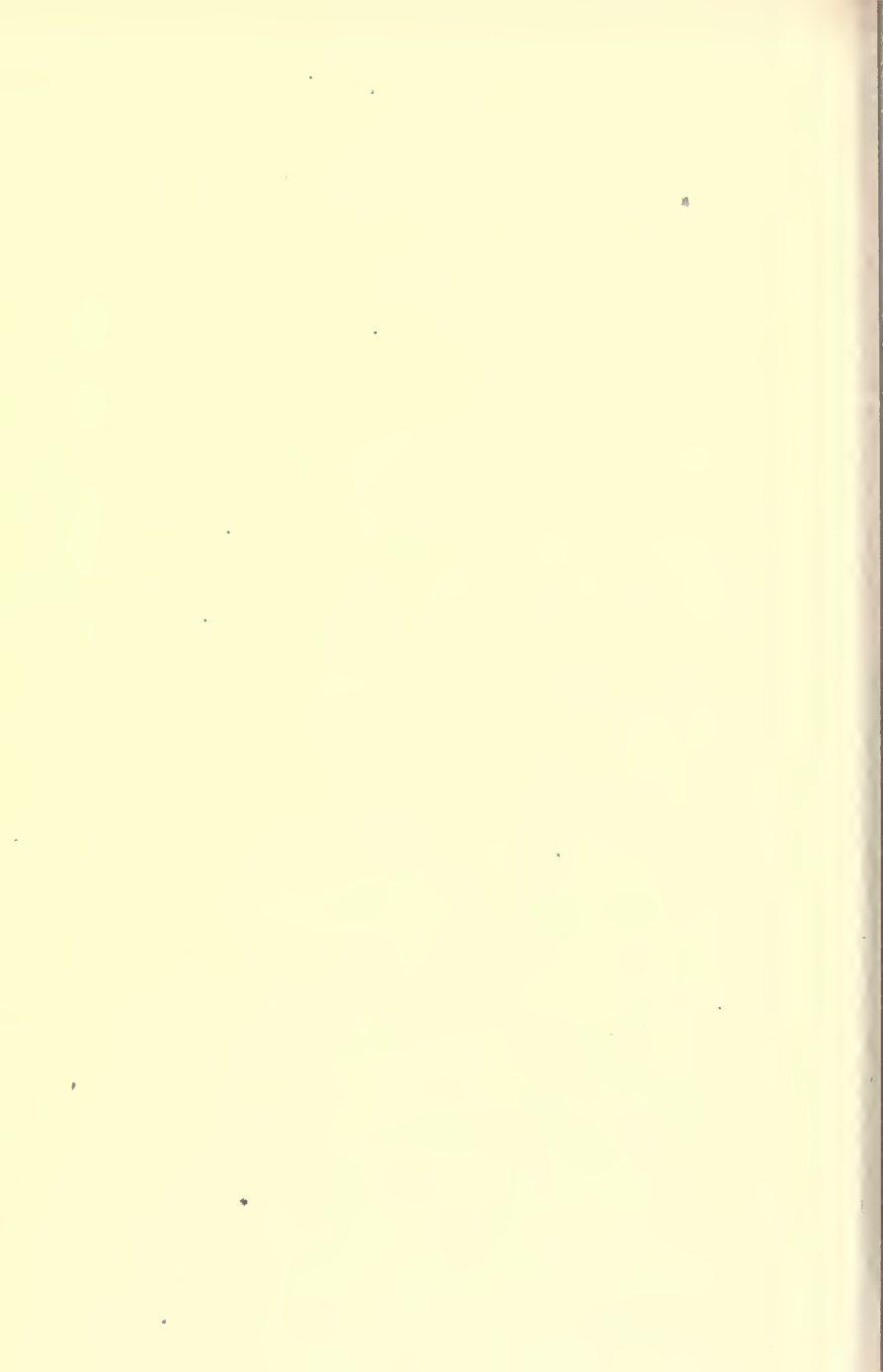
“Here!” wrathfully exclaimed Mr. Schwenkfelder, turning about and facing him, “you shut up that kind of talk, do you hear? And come on out of here! I ’m glad Simon turned up to cut you out! You never suited *me* fur no son-in-law. Now, out of here!”

Adam wavered only an instant, for, like all bullies, he was a coward.

“And mind you,” warned Mr. Schwenkfelder as he followed him out of the room, “you give Si any trouble, and you ’ll answer to *me*—I ’ll kick you good if you touch him! Yes, and if I hear of you callin’ your cowardly names after him! Now you mind if I don’t!”

The parlor door closed sharply behind them. And Simon and Pearly were alone.

THE DISCIPLINING OF  
MATHIAS



## THE DISCIPLINING OF MATHIAS

MATHIAS BUCKHOLTER'S wife had been dead fourteen months, and now, in the spring of the year, though he was not a young man, his fancy was lightly turning to thoughts of love, the object, or objects, of his tender consideration being the two Ebenshade girls at the farm across the road from his own. He had had them in mind as possible successors of his Emmy ever since the day of her funeral, when, with neighborly sympathy, they had told him to "come over oncet then," and with foresight he had responded that when his "first grief was over already" he "would mebbe come over."

As Mathias was childless, his widowerhood had been very lonesome. It had not even been economical (a great point to Mathias), for the cost of the funeral, together with what he had been obliged to pay out in the past year for "a hired girl," had amounted, by a clear calculation, to several dollars more than Em-

## The Disciplining of Mathias

my's annual expenditure for clothing. Not that Mathias was a poor man; he had a large bank account for a farmer; but he was what the neighbors called "near."

Taking all things into account, it was clear to Mathias that he must marry again. The question was, which of the two Ebenshade girls would "best suit." Either of them was indeed a prize, their father being a confirmed widower of long standing, whose fine large farm and accumulated savings would be inherited by his two daughters—Kate, aged twenty-six, and Geneva, twenty-four. Mathias had, in the past two months, been applying various tests to Geneva and Kate in order to ascertain their respective qualifications for the honor which he meant to confer upon one of them. He had one week asked Geneva to give him her "dough scrapings" for his horse next time she baked, and the following week, when it was Kate's turn to do the family baking, he had made the same request of her. The result had been disappointing. Geneva, who was fair and plump and alluring, had given him a whole "toot" (a paper bag) full of dried dough scrapings, thus betraying her deficient sense of domestic economy in having allowed so much dough to stick to her bowl. Kate, who was spare and bloodless and unattractive, had manifested her superiority to her sister in the fact that, as she informed him, she

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“did n’t never have no dough scrapings still when she baked.”

He had taken occasion also to watch each of them at their sewing, when on summer evenings, after the milking, they wheeled the machine out to the kitchen porch and worked at the household mending until sundown. Geneva, the alluring, wasted her thread—it made him cold to see the carelessness with which she broke it off at least two inches from the machine. Kate, on the other hand, always deftly broke it as close as possible, thus saving, Mathias was sure, some two or three spools of thread a year.

Even among the saving, thrifty people of Lancaster County, Mathias was called “wonderful close.” But this peculiarity was counted commendable rather than otherwise—an exaggerated virtue.

“Mathias Buckholter has three good farms and they want to say he could buy that many more yet,” Eli Ebensshade was fond of remarking to his daughters as a spur to the matrimonial alliance of which with gratification he saw the possibility.

“It ain’t much good to him if he *is* well fixed,” Geneva once ventured to respond, “so near as he is with his money. He is now wonderful keen on the penny, Pop!”

“He ’s a hard worker and a close saver,” approvingly affirmed her father, “which it would be a good

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thing if you was to be more that way yourself, Geneva, and not so giddy-headed as what you are still."

"I don't see no use," Geneva pouted, "in bein' that much on the make as what Mathias Buckholter is. His hired girl says he won't so much as leave her give a tramp a drink of buttermilk."

"Well," Eli conceded, "he is a little for hisself, I guess. There for a while he was so onneighborly he would n't do it to leave me hitch to his post still, when mine was n't put up yet. He sayed it wore his 'n out that much sooner for me to be hitchin' to it."

"He 's gentle-spoke for a man," said Kate in a tone of defense. "He ain't no rough talker that way. And if somepin' does ever make him cross, he 's easy peacified, I 've took notice already."

"Ach!" said Geneva impatiently, "the first time I seen him when he moved over to Canaan, I sayed, 'What for ugly lookin' man is him?' I used to think to myself he 's so long and thin, why if a body joggled him he 'd topple over. And when he makes so funny still to keep his store teeth in when he 's talkin', he looks that wicked-like, he minds me of them pictures I seen already of the devil. If he is gentle-spoke, Kate, he ain't pretty."

"No," thoughtfully granted Kate, "he ain't no pretty man. And he is wonderful near; yes, full much so."

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"He takes after his Mom," said Eli. "I mind when she was young the people sayed she turned plain 'cause it did n't cost so expensive to wear the plain dress as what it did to dress fashionable."

Mathias's decision as to whether it should be Kate or Geneva was precipitated by a circumstance that left him no more room for doubt.

Kate "turned plain." She discarded her worldly attire and donned the straight plain gown, three-cornered cape, and little white cap of the New Mennonites, one of the strictest sects in that land of strange sects—southeastern Pennsylvania.

Mathias was as greatly elated as surprised.

"It won't cost near so expensive to dress her as what it would to dress Genevy, who 's so wonderful fashionable that way."

He regretted, to be sure, that it was not the soft, fair Geneva instead of the spare and homely Kate that had adopted this inexpensive garb. But it certainly seemed that, all the circumstances considered, Providence clearly meant him to marry the more frugal and industrious elder sister.

The fact that as a member of the Mennonite sect Kate could not marry one who was still "in the world"—that is, who was not also a New Mennonite—was not a difficulty in Mathias's way, for he had always meant sometime to "give himself up" and join

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Meeting, and now was surely as propitious a time as any. He would have to buy new clothes "to say yes in," and he might as well lay the money out in getting the New Mennonite broad-brimmed hat and plain, clerically cut coat which some day he would, at any rate, be obliged to buy if he would be saved; for Mathias was the offspring of New Mennonites, and he knew full well that outside the tenets of this Church there was no salvation.

So, before going over to pay his customary Saturday evening visit at Eli Ebenshade's, he repaired to Lancaster City, had his beard shaved off, and bought himself a New Mennonite outfit.

Piously clad in this austere garb, he went, on Saturday evening, across the road to "speak his mind."

He found Kate alone in the kitchen. It was only six o'clock, but the customary early supper was over, the room "redd up," the milking "through," and the milk "separated"; so Kate was free for the rest of the evening.

Mathias told her at once that he had come to "set up" with her; and she, taking the hint that he did n't want Geneva or her father about, carried two heavy wooden rocking-chairs from the parlor to the front porch. Mathias never dreamed of offering to assist her—his Pennsylvania-Dutch view of woman involving no remotest hint of chivalry.

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“I ’m now wonderful surprised to see you, Mathias, dressed plain,” began Kate, rocking rather nervously in her big chair. “How did you come to give yourself up, Mathias?”

“Well, Kate, it was like this. It come to me I was n’t doin’ what was right in remainin’ in the world and dressin’ fashionable and votin’ at elections, which the Word of Gawd it says ye shall be neither law-breakers nor law-makers. (I can’t word it just exact.) So it come to me I ’d be on the safe side and join to the true Fold. So then here the other night I took and studied the Scripture and another book I got over there at the house—it ’s only sich a little pamphlet—a book of Christ. I studied till I was convicted of my sins. Not that I had n’t always been a moral man; but there ain’t no savin’ means in morality. So I studied till I come to the truth. I *seen!* And now, Kate, if any one comes to me and passes the remark, What do I think? I ’ll tell them my opinion straightforward: I ain’t no more goin’ to conform to this world. You see I had my mustache shaved off. It cost me fifteen cents. I always had a pride in that mustache, Kate. But I knowed it was a temptation of the Enemy to keep me in the World, and,” he piously added, “I ’ve conquered. It ’s no more. And now, Kate, tell me how you come to give yourself up? Them plain cloes becomes you something surprising,

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and I 'm wonderful glad you don't dress fashionable no more."

"Well, Mathias, it was this here way. You knowed last week we was to our cousin's funeral, ain't you did?"

Mathias gravely nodded. "Over to East Donegal?"

"Yes."

"Did you go from Mt. Joy up?" he asked.

"No; we come from Manheim down. You go out the pike to Snyder's Hotel and then you turn out up that way and there is it. Well, our cousin he died from fallin' sudden out of a cherry tree and broke his neck instant—and, Mathias," said Kate solemnly, "that was a very loud call to me! I kep' thinkin' to myself that verse of poe-try,

'Round as a ring that has no end,

So shall Eternity be!

and it made cold chills go over me still. And the preacher at the funeral sáyed how the time will come when for each one of us the calling of the Lord will be quit. So, Mathias, I was moved to give myself up. And O!" she fervently said, her plain face glowing with an earnestness that gave her something better than beauty, but which, it is to be feared, was not appreciated by Mathias, "I 've been so wonderful blest since then! The Lord is come very close to me,

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Mathias! I 'm an ignorant person—I ain't got no nice education that way—but the Lord is teachin' me wisdom anyhow. It don't come in education, servin' the Lord don't. The Word says that the things is hid from the wise and prudent, and yielded unto babes—and I says to myself, 'What for babes is them?' It could n't mean real little babies, because they could n't understand. It means babes in Christ. And I 'm a baby in Christ. I use n't to like Mennonites, Mathias; I used to talk down on 'em; but I seen different after Cousin Andrew Bushonger fell out the cherry tree so sudden."

After this serious exchange of confidences, the next step was easy and natural.

It was six months after their marriage that on one drizzling morning in November Kate "flopped," as she called it, in the midst of her week's baking; she suddenly felt herself giving way before a moral and physical weakness, to the dire neglect and ruin of her dough. She sank into a chair to "study things out, and if it took all day and no dinner ready for Mathias yet when he come in from the barn already."

Even to the frugal, Pennsylvania-Dutch soul of Kate, accustomed to abstain from the unnecessary expenditure of a penny, Mathias's closeness had come to seem a monstrosity. Her Mennonite principles,

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to which she had thus far in her married life been stanch, had led her to bear with "a meek and quiet spirit," his extraordinary meanness. But to-day a climax in her feelings had been reached; all of a sudden, while kneading her dough, she had realized that a turning-point had come to her, and that she would not submit another day to being "ground down."

Never before in her life had Kate been called upon to do such strenuous thinking as that which she did in the next half-hour. With Spartan determination, she resolved that once and for all she would end this strife with her husband as to the spending of money. Her own father, when she had kept house for him, had had sufficient confidence in her judgment and economy to allow her entire freedom in her management, without questioning her or demurring. True, with the more heedless Geneva, who now took chief charge, he was less free; but even she was not restricted a hundredth as much as her married sister. Kate wondered what Mathias would have done with a wife like Geneva, or, rather, what Geneva would have done with a husband like Mathias, who would never let a nickel pass through his wife's hands; who refused to buy for her the kitchen utensils which she absolutely required, or a new washboard when the old one tore her hands and the clothes; who obliged her to use brown sugar exclusively, and would not buy



“ A husband like Mathias, who refused to buy for her the kitchen utensils which she absolutely required ”



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her a sewing-machine; who watched what she ate and tried to check her appetite; who refused to let her burn enough wood and coal to keep herself healthfully comfortable.

“I ’ll learn him!” she affirmed to herself, with a cool quiet in her eyes that was born of her Mennonite abstemiousness and self-control. “I ’ll just give way and I won’t hold out in the faith—I ’ll dress fashionable again. He told me he has trade at Haverstick’s store in Lancaster for a bar’l of apples or a bushel of potatoes or whatever—and I ’ll just go to town and buy some fashionable cloes till the bar’l of whatever is paid for. Then I ’ll give a party anyhow and invite fifteen and bake a cake and have doughnuts and lemonade. I ’ll get the lemons and things at the store unbeknown, and he ’ll have to pay for ’em after. I ’ll act more fashionable than what I was already before I turned plain. That ’ll fix him. He will try to turn me plain again, and I ’ll say I won’t never give myself up no more till he passes his promise to give me the handlin’ of so much a week.”

Kate’s weapon was a mighty one, and she was shrewd enough to know it. The Mennonite rules made it obligatory upon the husband to put her away from him as a wife so long as she remained apostate. He must continue to keep and support her, but he dare not hold unnecessary converse with her, eat at

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table with her, or sleep at her side, until she repent her of her backsliding and once more come into the Fold.

In her heart Kate was entirely loyal to her faith; her backsliding was to be only a means of disciplining her husband. She reasoned that if, in order to lead straying sheep back into the Fold, the Meeting devised a discipline of domestic ostracism such as that above described, why should not she vary the prescribed discipline slightly, in order to meet the exigencies of this particular case?

Dinner was ready for Mathias when at eleven o'clock he came in, bland and amiable as usual, but in his customary spirit of obstinacy, and, of course, of zeal for saving.

It was when he was having his after-dinner smoke of impossibly cheap tobacco, while watching Kate "redd up," that his geniality expanded to communicativeness.

"What d' you think I come acrost this morning out here in the north field?" he said between puffs at his pipe. "A . dude from town that sayed he was a 'artist,' a-paintin' a photygrap of our cow with his horn broke. I spoke something to him about how if he wanted to pay a little for it, he could draw a photygrap of one of my horned cows, seein' he wanted a drawin' of a picture of a cow. But he sayed

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he had a preference for the one he was doin'. I ast him what he was going to do with it then when he got it drawed oncet, an' he says, 'sell it.' 'Ach,' I says, 'what 'll you get for a picture of a cow with his horn broke,' and he says 'one hundred dollars,' he says. 'Now think!' I says, 'Why, the cow herself would n't bring ten dollars! Who 'd be fool enough to give a hundred dollars for a drawin' of her?' He laughed hearty, but I don't know what at. He was now a good conwerser. I says to him, 'If you get a hundred dollars for that drawin', I think you ought to pay me for givin' you the dare to draw her.' And he ast me how much was it, and I says 'we 'd make it come at ten cents by the hour.' So he gimme a quarter. But he did n't set no full hour. Har'ly a half."

Kate was brushing up about the hearth, and she kept her back turned to her husband lest he see her face of shame at his charging the stranger for the privilege of drawing a picture of their thin old cow.

"You ain't hittin' it behind the wood-box," Mathias admonished, as he watched her broom. "There 's dust there."

Kate controlled her impulse to "hit it" over his head—knowing full well that such impulses were temptations of the Enemy—and plied her broom behind the wood-box.

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“Gimme a drink to wrench my mouth out oncet,” he said.

She took from a closet a tumbler containing about two tablespoonfuls of sour milk, which she poured into a garbage bucket, and then walked over to the dishpan to wash the glass. Mathias started forward with an exclamation of distress. “Why did you throw that sour milk to aside for?”

“It was n’t enough to do nothin’ with, and I ain’t got no more tumblers.”

“Why did n’t you gimme a drink in a cup then? Don’t throw nothin’ to aside that can be used. I won’t stand none of that, Kate. Don’t you do it again.”

Kate washed the glass and handed it to him filled with water.

“Do you understand, Kate?” he persisted.

“Oh, be sure!” she answered, more impatiently than he had ever heard her speak since she had turned plain.

He looked at her curiously. “I seen from the barn this morning that some one come in for a while to see you. What for girl was she?”

“Sally Eberly.”

“Oh, her. Did she mebbe holt you back from your work some?”

Kate turned with an unwonted flush in her face and

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met his eye. "I ast her to stop and eat dinner. But she sayed she knowed you 'd not make her welcome."

"Why did you ast her to eat here fur? Ain't she got her own home and her own victuals? I guess I pay for my victuals anyhow. Let her pay for her'n."

"The Rules and the Bible says we must be hospitable. Mennonites always practises hospitality. You don't obey to the Rules."

Mathias puffed at his pipe thoughtfully. "It means be hospitable to the brethren; not to the World. Sally Eberly, she 's in the World. Your water 's hot enough now for your dishes," he digressed; "ain't it? You 'd better outen that fire and not waste your wood."

"Mathias Buckholter, I wisht 'at you 'd clear out of here and leave me be!" Kate crossly returned.

Mathias stared at her in surprise. "Ain't you mebbe feelin' well, Kate?"

Kate almost slammed her plates into the dishpan and literally dashed her hot water at them. She found herself wishing that some of the boiling water would splash upon Mathias's placid countenance and scald it into a grimace or a frown.

"Don't you be breakin' any dishes," he anxiously warned her. "If you ain't feelin' just so good, don't be wastin' money goin' to no doctor, Kate, for it 's all blamed foolishness to be supposin' they can do you

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any good. Emmy she was took with such a pain in her shoulder there for a while, and it got so bad that unbeknownst to me she called in Dr. Isenberger over to New Sanville, and he rubbed her, but it only just moved the pain from her shoulder down to her heart. And I said, 'If that 's all you wanted to do, you 'd better of let that pain where it was.' And after Emmy died he sent me a bill for five dollars!" Mathias gasped at the recollection. "He ketched me awful. And I had to pay it, too. He would n't hear to me not payin' it, for all I talked at him for two hours. And at last he says, 'I can't listen to you no more; I got a patient up the road a good piece yet, and my time 's up!' Then I says, sarcastic that way, 'I hope that patient won't get' ketched like what you 've ketched me,' and I chucked the five at him and went out. But that settled me; I ain't never no more goin' to have no doctor runnin' here. He 'd better have left that pain where it was. It spited me something wonderful."

He "outened" his pipe and rose to go out to his work.

"Mathias," said Kate, "make it so the buggy 's ready for me. I 'm goin' to Lancaster."

Mathias paused with his hand on the doorknob, mingled surprise and obstinacy in every line of his sleek face.

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“What fur?”

Kate washed her dishes with a vigor that made him shudder with apprehension of their fate.

“I ’m goin’ to town to buy cloes. I ’m goin’ to give way and dress fashionable. *That* ’s what I ’m goin’ to do.”

Mathias walked to his chair and sank into it.

“Kate!” he gasped. “Has the Enemy been temptin’ you?”

“Yes. And he ’s been usin’ you for an instrument.”

“Me! I ain’t urgin’ you to dress fashionable, Kate!”

“But you ’re temptin’ me to cherishin’ a spirit I ain’t learned of the Master! And if I can’t obey to the Rules, I won’t be no hypocrite—I ’ll give way, open and honest and dress fashionable! You just make it so the buggy ’s ready now!”

“It don’t suit for the horse to-day.”

“Then I ’ll get Pop’s. And I ’ll get Genevy to go with, to help choose my fashionable things. And I ’ll treat her to a plate of ice cream yet.”

“Where ’ll you get the money?”

“You ’re got trade at Haverstick’s. I ’ll buy my things off of him.”

“I say, I won’t give you the dare, Kate. You have n’t the dare.”

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"I ain't askin' you have I the dare. I 'm goin'."

"But I can't eat or talk or sit with you no more if you give up," he remonstrated, looking white.

"You can turn fashionable yourself if you want."

"It costs more expensive to live fashionable."

Kate turned on him again with vigorous decision.

"Mathias, now you listen at me. You pass me your promise you 'll gimme seven dollars a week to buy what I need for the housekeepin' and myself and I 'll not give way. You don't pass me that promise and I 'll run you in debt, and give a party, and whatever!"

Mathias stared at her blankly. His Emmy had never turned upon him by word or look. How should this vigorous woman be met and put down? He would have to ponder the matter heavily.

Slowly he rose and went again to the door. "I ain't hitchin' up for you. You stay at home and tend to your work."

Kate resumed her dish-washing, and gave him no articulate answer; the set of her jaw was answer enough.

He went out to his farm to go on with his day's work, but his soul was heavy within him. Kate meant what she had said. His conviction of that was deep and unwavering. How, then, was he going to escape the inevitable anguish of unlooked-for expenditure?

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Mechanically he sawed his wood as he bent to the terrible problem. Should Kate turn fashionable, life would not be worth living if he could not, by the rules of his faith, eat with her, sleep with her, hold converse with her. And what a great saving of expense it was to have her "dress plain" and live the abstemious life of the New Mennonites! Would it not, in the long run, be more economical to accede to her demands for an allowance and thus keep her within the true Fold?

But seven dollars a week! He groaned aloud at the thought of letting her handle his money and spend it as she wished, without his supervision.

What could he do? How escape from these awful alternatives? Was there no way out by which he might keep both his money and his wife?

His troubled thoughts were broken in upon by a sound which made his heart rise up in his throat—the sound of carriage wheels across the road. He hastened to the fence, to see his wife and her sister seated in their father's buggy, driving out of the barnyard to the pike.

Throwing open his front gate, he ran over to them and seized the horse's bridle.

"Kate!" he gasped, "what are you going to do?"

"I 'm goin' to town to buy out your trade at Haverstick's in fashionable cloes," she grimly made answer, and the eyes of her sister Geneva gleamed with the

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double satisfaction of seeing her brother-in-law de-fied and the prospect of a shopping excursion.

"You ain't goin to do it to go, Kate!" pleaded Mathias. "You daresent give way. You 're got to stand firm like what I 'm doin' and serve the Lord."

"It 's easy for you to stand firm—the Enemy ain't temptin' you still, like what he 's temptin' me througn you as an instrument. I 'm goin' to town, and I 'm goin' to get me and Genevy ice cream and run a bill up on you."

"I 'll have to tell the brethren to come and reason with you, Kate."

"It won't do no good. My mind 's made up, Mathias."

"I 'll buy you some of them kitchen things you want, Kate—I 'll get you a new washboard and some tumblers and whatever."

"Will you gimme what I sayed—by the week?"

"How much was it you sayed you wanted me to leave you have? Was it two dollars?"

"No, it was n't. It was seven. And I want a wash-woman. Pop gets Genevy one since I ain't there to help her, and you can afford it just as good as what he can. And I want a telyphome, Mathias!" she boldly demanded, while Geneva's bosom swelled with the excitement of the occasion—"The country people 's getting telyphomes wherever they can handy,

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and Pop says he 'll pay half and use our'n if we have one. You pass me your promise you 'll gimme them things and I won't give way. You don't pass me no promise and I 'll cost you just as expensive as whatever I can."

Mathias being of German, not English extraction, was able to recognize his own defeat. His face was white with misery as he looked up into the resolute countenance of his wife.

"Think of what the brethren and sisters 'll think of you if you give way, Kate!" he put forth as a last feeble remonstrance.

"I ain't a-carin'! The Enemy 's made me feel that wonderful reckless, Mathias, I 'll wear my fashionable cloes to Meetin' next Sunday!"

Mathias's hand dropped from the horse's bridle.

"Kate," he said feebly, "I pass my promise. You need n't go to Haverstick's."

The hardened lines in Kate's face relaxed, and she looked at her husband kindly.

"All right, Mathias."

She turned the horse's head, not toward town, but down the road, where lived the washwoman.









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